THE

LABOUR MONTHLY

A MAGAZINE OF INTERNATIONAL LABOUR

Editor : R. PALME DUTT

Volume 17 October, 1935 Number 10

PRINCIPAL CONTENTS

The New Emergency

R. P. D.

The Seventh Congress of the Communist International

H. POLLITT

Abyssinia, the Fascist War and the Labour Movement

J. A. MAHON

The Margate Trades Union Congress

J. B. FIGGINS

Book Review

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SUBJECTS FOR DISCUSSION:

(1) **The coming General Election and the fight to defeat the National Government.**
(2) **The Italo-Abyssinian struggle and the daily increasing preparations for War (gas mask drill, etc.)**
(3) **The decline of Liverpool as a port and the problem of mass unemployment.**
(4) **The attempt of the British Union of Fascists to make Lancashire its base.**

Readers are urged to send in suggestions on these subjects for addition or alteration, also the Names and Addresses of Organisations they consider should be invited to THE MANAGER, THE LABOUR MONTHLY, 7 JOHN STREET, LONDON, W.C.1.

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A Magazine of International Labour

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A HANDBOOK OF MARXISM

edited by EMILE BURNS

1,088 pages, 5/-

For some years there has been an increasing interest in the theories and general outlook of what is known as Marxism.

The purpose of this *Handbook of Marxism* is to set out these theories in the most authoritative form possible—in the words of the founders of Marxism and of the greatest of their followers. It is therefore a collection of extracts from their writings, selected so as to give the reader the most comprehensive account of Marxism possible within the limits of a single volume.

The Contents

The Handbook opens with *The Communist Manifesto*, written by Marx and Engels in 1848, summing up the history of human society ; this was the first scientific programme of the socialist movement.

Then follow extracts in which Marx and Engels applied this historical analysis to contemporary Europe : Marx's *Class Struggles in France*, 1848–50, with Engels' Introduction, and Marx's *Eighteenth Brumaire*, together with Engels' *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Germany*. These lead up to *The Civil War in France*, in which Marx analyses the experience of the Paris Commune in 1871.

Marxist Philosophy

These and other historical studies are followed by essential passages from the philosophical works in which Marx and Engels expound their general view of the world. In *Feuerbach* and the *Theses on Feuerbach* Engels and Marx develop the theory of dialectical materialism, which is carried further by Engels in *Anti-Dühring*. Then come Engels' *The Housing Question* and *The Origin of the Family*—describing the rise of the family as a social institution, its relation to property and class divisions, and the rise and character of the State.

"Capital"

The introduction to *The Critique of Political Economy* serves to introduce the essential passages from Marx's monumental work, *Capital* : the analysis of capital, how surplus value is created and accumulated, the theory of value, commodities, exchange and money; how capitalism extends, why the rate of profit falls, and the relation between profit, interest and rent.

Lenin before 1917

The selections from Lenin start with *The Teachings of Karl Marx*, a concentrated summary of Marx's theories.

In *What is to be Done?* (1900) Lenin foresaw the split between the

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" Bolsheviks " and the " Mensheviks " as a necessary step. Then comes *The Revolution of 1905*, in which Lenin analyses the experiences of 1905, and points to the Soviets as the future form of working-class government. The extracts from *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* state Lenin's views on the theory of knowledge.

The next group of Lenin's writings is associated with the war ; *Socialism and War*, and *Imperialism*, in which he traces the growth of monopoly capitalism and the inevitable international conflict arising from it ; and *The State and Revolution*, the classic treatment of this question.

From this theoretical treatment we pass straight to the revolutions in Russia in 1917 : *Letters from Afar* ; *The Tasks of the Proletariat in our Revolution* ; and *On the Eve of October*.

Lenin after 1917

The key writings of the period after the revolution are *Kautsky the Renegade* and *Left Wing Communism : An Infantile Disorder* (which deals at some length with the British working-class movement).

Stalin

Stalin's writings carry forward those of Lenin into the period of the Five Year Plans, showing the gradual working out of the theories of Marx. The articles and speeches given deal with the Communist Party ; the Peasantry ; the National Question ; Equality, and Responsibility.

Communist Programme

The last document in the Handbook is *The Programme of the Communist International* of 1928, which re-states the principles of *The Communist Manifesto* of 1848, and elaborates in considerable detail the Marxist analysis of the present world situation.

Editing and Price

The passages have been chosen by Emile Burns, who has added in each case a bibliographical note, and an explanation of the circumstances in which the work was written and of its special significance in the development of Marxism : as well as a glossary of names and unfamiliar terms and a 30-page index.

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A Warning—and the Way Out

THE contributions to the Debt Fund this month amount to only £3 13s. 8d. This is the lowest amount that readers have been able to send in since the LABOUR MONTHLY started this campaign last year to liquidate its debt of £480 and to build up a Guarantee Fund so that the future of the LABOUR MONTHLY would be assured.

While very splendid efforts have been made during this period by numerous readers in response to the appeal, there has been in the last few months a dangerous falling off, *and this too when the total of the debt had been brought well below the £400 mark and circulation is continuing to rise.*

Next month the LABOUR MONTHLY intends to present to its readers a detailed statement of the present financial position so that all readers in full knowledge of the facts may do their utmost during the winter months to ensure that the debt is finally cleared off, and the Guarantee Fund built up so that it fully covers the monthly deficit of £28.

This, as last year's efforts have shown, can assuredly be done if all readers re-double their support.

In conclusion, we would especially appeal once again to all those who have been delegates from their organisations to LABOUR MONTHLY Conferences to raise this question inside their organisation and see that a grant is made to maintain a journal that has been able to provide the most diverse sections of the labour movement with an opportunity for clarifying the attitude of the movement on the most urgent problems affecting all to-day.

Postpone it no longer but fill in one of the forms overleaf and play your part in setting the MONTHLY finally on its feet.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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NOTES OF THE MONTH

The New Emergency—Seventh World Congress—Transformed World Situation—World War and the Soviet Union—Changes in the Working Class Movement—The New Line—The Response to New Needs—The Great Turning Point—Retreat or Advance?—The Road to the World Revolution—Responsibilities of Political Leadership—Interweaving of World Issues—Abyssinia—Working Class Divisions—Right and "Left" Imperialist Arguments—Revolutionary Line—The World Conflict—Working Class Action—Contradictions of Imperialism—Imperialist Divisions Analysed—The Concrete Problem—The Consequent Tactical Line—The Fight Against the National Government—Labour Official Line and the National Government—The Labour Party Conference and the Way Forward

Close up your ranks, proletarians of all countries, under the flag of peace and the social revolution.

Appeal of the Russian Socialist Federal Soviet Republic to the Toiling, Oppressed and Exhausted Peoples of Europe, December 19th, 1917.

WE have entered into the most serious and urgent situation since the war. Every old issue is transformed by the new realities. The question of Abyssinia, the basic power-relations and conflicts that it has laid bare on a world scale, and sharp controversies and new alignments and tactical problems that it has raised in the working class movement—all this is only a symptom of the new type of issues that are opening out. We are entering into a period of big issues and big decisions, of rapid and far-reaching transformations in the world situation and in the international

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working-class movement, of responsibilities without equal for the political leadership of the working class. Never was there more need of cool heads, long views and unflinching audacity in action to be equal to the sharp and sudden changes of the new world situation. The storm is breaking all round us. Far behind now is the old era of stabilisation. The consequences of the world crisis, of the bankruptcy of the old liberal social-democratic policies, and of the fascist offensive, are now unfolding themselves with lightning speed. World imperialism is openly advancing in every continent to the struggle for the new division of the world. In the forefront the fascist Powers are launching the war-offensives which they have ceaselessly prepared. The hour and the testing-time is here for the massing of all forces to defeat this offensive. On our present actions and decisions in the months before us depends the character of a whole future historical period, whether mankind must advance through the limitless blood and destruction of a new world war to the ultimate revolution, or whether we can yet succeed—we have still time, we have still the possibility, but not for long—in massing the front in all countries, in unity with the Soviet Union, to turn back the offensive of blood and terror and reaction, and advance rapidly to the struggle for power and the building of a new world. This and nothing less underlies the issues which are at present agitating the working-class movement.

THE Seventh World Congress of the Communist International met at the turning point of this great transition from one period to another, and gave the leading line for a whole future period. This Congress, more than any Congress before, spoke for the whole human race, and showed the one way forward from the destruction, blood and terror that overhangs the world. The call of the Seventh Congress for the unity of all the working masses without exception, for the unity of the overwhelming majority of the population in every country against the finance-capitalist oligarchies who are preparing to drown civilisation in slaughter and barbarism in order to maintain their sinking power, will echo and resound

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louder and louder through the coming period. What was the achievement of the Seventh Congress? The achievement of the Seventh Congress was above all that, at the moment of greatest urgency, when on every side in the working class movement there was gathering the sense of the imperative need of fresh vision and reorientation to meet the new issues of to-day, the Seventh Congress, with the sweeping boldness and unsparing realism of Marxist-Leninist theory, faced completely the new world situation that is developing and all its implications, and drew therefrom with concrete and unequivocal clearness, in the midst of the enormously difficult and complicated issues of the present situation, the positive path forward for the working masses all over the world to extricate themselves from the dilemmas in which the past period of reformist illusions has landed them, confront the towering new menaces which have consequently arisen to-day, and reach forward to win again the initiative and new advance of socialism in the world.

WHEREIN lies the transformation of the world situation to-day? It is a transformation that applies alike to the capitalist world, to the world of socialism in power represented by the Soviet Union, and to the international working-class movement, and to the relations between and within all these. The old post-war era of capitalism, of attempted capitalist restoration and stabilisation and organised world capitalism, went smash in the world economic crisis. To-day after six years world capitalism, strangling in its contradictions, is unable to find the path of recovery from the prolonged depression without parallel; the explosive forces accumulate against the old forms; all the remains of the post-war settlements have broken down save those alone, the territorial settlements, which can only be broken by armed force; and against these the attack now begins. World capitalism moves openly to the battle for the new division of the world as its only path forward; this issue is to-day openly proclaimed by all the statesmen of capitalism, in the declarations of a Hoare no less than of a Hitler or Mussolini. The Powers in possession try

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to speak of peaceable adjustment at the same time as they arm with redoubled speed for the battle ; the Powers pressing forward for change openly proclaim armed force as the arbiter. Through Manchukuo yesterday, through Abyssinia to-day, through Memel to-morrow the struggle goes forward with accelerating tempo. At the same time, parallel with this, the internal politics of capitalism go through a change. The democratic-pacifist forms which characterised the earlier post-war era to veil the imperialist settlements and hold back the working class revolution are increasingly thrust aside ; capitalism moves in varying degrees towards fascist forms of open terrorist dictatorship ; in a number of states, coinciding with the states pressing forward to change by war, fascist dictatorships are established ; in the bourgeois-democratic states the democratic forms begin to be restricted and attacked. That is one side of the picture, the picture of world capitalism to-day.

ON the other side, the period of the world economic crisis of capitalism and prolonged depression has coincided with the gigantic growth in strength and final victory of socialism in the Soviet Union, its advance from a previously low and undeveloped level to already the second world power in technical and economic weight and on the way to becoming the first, and its corresponding steadily increasing weight and influence in world politics. This process has received its reflection in the changed relations of the Soviet Union and the League of Nations, at the same time as Japan and Germany have passed out, and the Soviet Union has entered into a strong position on the League Council, able to reach from this forum a world audience on a scale not before equalled and to exert a public and direct influence that places difficulties in the way of the war-makers. At the same time the spearhead of the most chauvinist and aggressive elements of world imperialism and fascism is turned more and more directly against the Soviet Union as the ultimate line of direction for the future war. In opposition to this, the Soviet Union, which represents for the first time a new type of world power with no imperialist interests, with no colonies or colonial

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ambitions, with no other external interests save peace and opposition to all aggression, has become more and more visibly throughout the world the centrepoint and leader of all those elements and forces, including the smaller states, which oppose and seek to prevent the new world war and fear fascist aggression and expansionist aims. On this basis the Soviet Union has built its series of non-aggression pacts and guarantee pacts, including the guarantee pact with the one imperialist great Power, France, which for reasons of its present position is opposed to the new world war. By this policy the Soviet Union has not only delayed the outbreak of the new world war and weakened the world position of the fascist states, but has more and more established its leadership and authority, not only in the eyes of the workers of the world, but also with large sections of the intermediate strata in all countries who fear a new war, as the powerful fighter for peace against a new world war. This is a new situation in world politics.

NO less profound has been the transformation in the conditions of the class struggle and in the international working class. The blows of the world crisis on the economic concessions won in the earlier post-war era, the smashing of the pacifist-democratic illusions of organised capitalism, the smashing of the illusions of the easy gradual peaceful path to socialism, and the laying bare of the open terrorist dictatorship of capital in fascist violence, have undermined the old basis of social democratic illusions in the working class and led to the present crisis in the social democratic parties. The first effect was a widespread confusion and sense of loss of direction in the majority of the working class. But no less rapidly the class instinct of the workers rallied to the new conditions of the struggle, as shown notably in Austria, in Spain, and in France, and an overwhelming tide set in to mass unity in the struggle, without distinction of parties, against the attacks of capitalism and fascism and against the menace of a new world war. The old reactionary bloc of social democracy in the Second International has broken up under the impact of this tide ; whole sections and parties have moved to unity in

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the struggle, at the same time as the remaining reactionary core of the old leadership still opposes unity. This new situation has transformed relations within the working class movement. The Communist International has responded unreservedly to the paramount need for unity, and, while maintaining more than ever the advocacy of the revolutionary line which can alone lead the way forward, fights shoulder to shoulder with all sections of social democracy that stand for unity in the struggle. The majority of the workers are not yet convinced of the necessity of the Communist path, of Soviet Power as the sole solution and path to socialism, but they are already, under the blows of hard facts, increasingly losing confidence in the old reformist illusions and recognising the necessity of united mass struggle if they are not to go down in slavery and defeat. Herein lies the key to advance at the present point, to future revolutionary unity and to the world revolution.

THE new line of the Seventh World Congress followed from the new world situation. So long as the post-war capitalist stabilisation still held and by its seeming success dominated the situation, spreading the illusions of organised capitalism, prosperity through rationalisation, imperialist peace through the League of Nations, democratic progress and the peaceful path to socialism by class-collaboration, with social democracy purveying these conceptions to the masses and maintaining its influence over the majority of the workers, for so long the revolutionary minority in the imperialist countries could in the main only conduct a stubborn, tenacious propagandist fight against these illusions, against bourgeois democracy as the cover of capitalist dictatorship, against imperialist pacifism and the League of Nations as the veil of imperialist oppression and of the anti-soviet crusade, against the rotten stabilisation and rationalisation leading to future crisis, against social democracy as the agency and main social basis of capitalist rule. But to-day a profound reversal of the situation has taken place, leading to the necessity of a whole set of new valuations, not in principle, but in defining the ground of the

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battle, if we are to remain true to the realities of the class struggle in the new conditions.

THE attempts at world capitalist organisation have gone smash. The dreams of peaceful democratic progress have gone smash. World capitalism moves openly to open violent dictatorship, to fascism. World capitalism moves openly to war. Pure democracy, which was before for a short period the banner of the entire reaction against the working class revolution, has now become the target of attack from the reaction. The most aggressive imperialist countries move out of the League of Nations in order to secure more easily their freedom of action for war. In a whole series of countries the influence of social democracy has been wrecked, and the social basis of capitalist rule transformed. The Soviet Union is stronger than ever, and exerts a stronger influence on the working class, at the same time as capitalism concentrates all its forces for a life-and-death struggle against it. Through all these processes the immediate front of the class struggle has been transformed.

WHERE before the dream of democracy was a counter-revolutionary opiate, to-day the fight for democratic rights against fascism has become a mass fight against the main attack of finance-capital. Where before the hypocritical talk of peace was a main weapon of imperialist enslavement, to-day the fight for peace against the new world war has become a fight of the masses, in unity with the Soviet Union, against the main drive of finance-capital. The old slogans take new meanings and pass to different sides of the frontier, according as the battle rages. The masses are awakening from the old illusions to the new conditions of struggle. The need of the hour is for the widest mass unity against fascism, against imperialist war, for the defence of the Soviet Union. The Seventh World Congress, in voicing this call, has voiced the deepest need of the masses throughout the world at the present stage. This line holds the key to the future. For Communism

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has seen that this present new stage of the struggle, this transitional stage of elementary fighting unity against the ferocious onslaught of dying capitalism is the historical path of advance of the main body of the workers, no longer only of the vanguard, from reformism to revolution.

A LINE of retreat, a falling back to the defensive: such is the comment of a section of the bourgeois press on the new line. A recognition of the correctness of the position of social democracy on the question of democracy, of peace and the League of Nations; such is the comment of the reactionary wing of the old social democratic leadership. Such comment understands nothing of the new deepened conditions of struggle that are opening out. It is perfectly true that the past period of reformism and democratic illusions has heavily thrust back the working class in the whole world outside the Soviet Union from the strength and temporary gains after the war to the lowest gulf to-day. That is the inheritance from reformism which we have to-day to face and find the way to overcome. It is true that the mirage of the democratic path to socialism has not only failed to reach socialism, but has ended in even the democratic forms becoming lost or endangered. Never was the axiom more powerfully demonstrated that reforms are the by-product of the revolutionary class struggle. All the democratic concessions after the war, the Weimar constitutions and Vienna housing schemes, whose praises were sung as the opening of a new era and triumphant alternative path to revolution, were only the price paid by the bourgeoisie to buy off the revolution; so soon as the immediate danger was in their view circumvented and a new stage opens, they begin to withdraw the concessions, and the ideologues of pure democracy stand exposed. Even the maintenance of democratic rights is revealed as dependent on the strength of the extra-democratic extra-parliamentary mass struggle, as the example of France has shown.

BUT this does not mean that, because the chain of defeats through the leadership of reformism has thus led to a reduction to an elementary stage of the struggle,

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therefore the awakening and facing these elementary issues of struggle to-day is a new retreat. On the contrary, it is the beginning of new advance, of awakening from the old illusions and facing the realities of the struggle. In the present deepened stage of the general crisis of capitalism these elementary issues are at the same time close to the basic issues of class power, to revolutionary issues. This also the example of France has illustrated. When the workers are no longer fooled by the legalist illusions of bourgeois democracy and have learnt to fight for democratic rights as a section of the class fight against the class enemy, they are already setting their feet on the road that leads to the fight for real democracy, for workers' democracy. When they are no longer fooled by the phrases of peace, but have learnt to fight for peace against the warmakers, against imperialism and fascism, they are on the road that leads to the battle for the overthrow of imperialism and the world revolution. This is the end of the road which begins to-day with the fight for the most elementary issues, recognised by all the workers, in the dire need of the hour.

BUT this present initial stage of the fight, the mobilising the mass front, after the defeats and disruption through reformism, against the strongly entrenched enemy, and finding the way of advance in the present difficult position against the heavy menacing dangers, requires very high skill of political leadership, elasticity, manœuvring power, the whole range of Marxist tactics, ability to utilise every weak point and contradiction of the enemy, to choose the most advantageous ground of battle, to change quickly the ground of battle in a new situation, to do everything in order to ensure mastery and final victory in the gathering world struggle now opening for the whole future of socialism. Hence the sharp hostility of the Seventh World Congress to all hidebound formulas, to all self-satisfied repetitions of empty abstractions without judging a concrete situation, to all schematism, and the demand for responsible generalship and initiative at every point in the decisive struggles now before us.

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ONE further central characteristic of the new stage of struggle now opening is the ever closer interweaving and *unification* of all the separate issues and fronts of the struggle into a single world struggle. The fight against fascism and reaction in each country unites with the fight against fascism on a world scale ; just as the pro-fascist elements in all countries work to assist and strengthen the fascist states and their aggressive policies, seeing in these the weapon of reaction on a world scale and eventually against the Soviet Union, so we need to work to weaken in every way the fascist states and defeat their aggressive plans ; this unites with the fight against world war, the drive to which is directly led by the fascist states, and with the fight for the defence of the Soviet Union, and this in turn with the colonial struggle and with the interests of the working class struggle in each country. The attempt to set up imaginary oppositions between one phase of this struggle and another is only in the interests of the class enemy ; on the basis of always maintaining the independence of the working class struggle in every phase we must know how to combine the fight on all these fronts. Thus the resistance of a small country against fascist aggression becomes not only a question of the defence of national independence against imperialism, but of vital importance on a world scale as a direct ally of the fight of the working class against fascism. In the same way the defeat of the Italian war of conquest on Abyssinia becomes not only an advance of the colonial struggle, but a weakening and possible downfall of Mussolini and advance of the Italian revolution. We must judge every issue that develops, not in isolation, but in relation to this developing conflict of world forces. To fail in this is to fail in Marxist leadership at the most critical juncture. There are no easy solutions, no ready-made formulas beforehand for all the concrete problems that will ceaselessly arise ; every situation will require its own solution to be worked out, will require responsible political leadership on the basis of an internationally united working class line in relation to our strategic aims. Whoever runs away from this task and tries to find refuge in a few abstract formulas

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is betraying the responsibility of leadership in the most critical stage of the working class struggle.

THE first issue on a world scale of the new stage of struggle and the first testing of the new line has come with the Italian attack on Abyssinia and the resulting world imperialist complications. The response in the working class movement has shown that there is still a widespread confusion and non-understanding of the new conditions of struggle among the older socialist cadres, including among those who are on the left wing and in sympathy with the united front fight against fascism and imperialism. This is serious in the extreme, and it is of the greatest importance that the issues should be rapidly cleared. With the old reactionary elements of the Labour Party and trade union leadership who proclaim their confidence in the National Government and support the war aims of British Imperialism we can have nothing in common. But among all the militant left wing labour elements who sincerely desire to fight fascism and imperialism, no less than among the main body of the Labour Party and trade union membership, it is of the greatest importance that no misunderstandings or cross-purposes should weaken the front, and that a common line of fight should be found, adequately corresponding to the heavily serious needs of the situation.

HOW has this division among the militant elements on this vitally important issue arisen? The root cause lies rather deeper than has yet been recognised, in the midst of the present fierce surface discussions on the imperialist complications, hypothetical imperialist wars and opposition to all imperialist wars. *The root cause lies in the deeply ingrained, largely unconscious, imperialist outlook of all traditional British socialists, both on the right and on the left.* The right reveals it by hastening to the support of the British Government on a war issue and proclaiming British Imperialism as the champion of peace and justice ("The Voice of Britain," *Daily Herald* editorial on Hoare's speech). But many of the left socialists no less reveal it by making the central issue how to keep the British people out of war and thus in practice supporting the fascist

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theory of the localisation of war. For both there is in reality no international outlook, but a deeply British outlook. For both the vital issue of the struggle of the Abyssinian people for their independence has no real living existence, despite lip-service, is remote and secondary, a mere counter in relation to the real deeply absorbing issues of British policy.

THE right profess support for Abyssinian independence ; but they are perfectly ready to acclaim the British-French plan for the subjection and partition of Abyssinia under League auspices as the triumph of peace and justice. The left profess sympathy for the Abyssinian struggle, but the sympathy remains platonic (" the only contribution which we can make to the solution of the problem is to build up as rapidly as possible a convinced socialist opinion in the country," Cripps at the Socialist League London Conference on September 14) ; they see Abyssinia as only " another Belgium," a pretext of imperialism, and they are convinced that Abyssinia is in any case bound to be conquered by imperialism (" In an imperialist world imperialist methods will be used," Cripps at the same conference ; " One result of the present crisis can be prophesied safely : whether there is war or not, Abyssinia will lose its independence," Brockway, in the *New Statesman and Nation*, 14.9.35). *This defeatism of the left coincides exactly in its practical outcome with the open imperialism of the right wing.* For both the common premiss of their outlook is that Abyssinia must inevitably become a victim of imperialism ; their only difference concerns the practical line of British policy, between the League-sanctions line and the non-interventionist line ; and this in reality only reflects the same difference within the ranks of the British bourgeoisie, between the dominant Baldwin-Lloyd George line and the non-interventionist Rothermere-Mosley line.

THE international revolutionary outlook can only approach this whole question from an entirely different basis. The first elementary issue which needs to be cleared is the significance of the Abyssinian people's struggle against Italian

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Fascism in particular, and against imperialism in general, for the international working class. This issue is elementary, and yet it is just on this issue that the widest confusion exists in the working-class movement, as the discussion at the Labour Monthly Trade Union Conference in August revealed, and the starting-point of all the later confusion. The tendencies are still widespread, as that discussion revealed, to regard the conflict between Abyssinia and Italy as merely a conflict between two " capitalist countries " or at the best non-socialist countries, of no concern to socialism or the working class. These tendencies are in reality only a hangover of the old narrow shameful traditions of reformist socialism and trade unionism in Britain, which used to accept with complacency the imperialist position and look with contempt and indifference on the national struggles of the oppressed colonial peoples as " merely capitalist," because the leadership might be bourgeois, and of no concern to socialism. This outlook is nothing but disguised chauvinism, the most dangerous and subtlest enemy of the British working-class movement. The whole teaching of Marx and Engels, addressed especially to the British workers on just this point, the whole experience of imperialism, the whole teaching of Lenin, has driven home the wrongness of this outlook. Every national struggle for liberation against imperialism, above all, every armed national struggle against imperialism, should be especially dear to the British working class as their strongest ally, as indispensable to their own victory over imperialism, and to be aided by every weapon in their power.

BUT if this is true of every national and colonial struggle for independence against imperialism, how much more is it true in the present case, where the direct attacking power is fascism, the most aggressive enemy of the working class, where the aggression of Italy on Abyssinia is the first stage of the new world fascist drive to expansion and war, leading up to the attack on the Soviet Union, and where the whole struggle for peace against the new world war is now directly expressed in this issue. The Abyssinian struggle for independence, so far from becoming secondary in relation to these wider world

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issues, is a hundred times magnified in its significance for the international working class by this whole world situation. If the Italian fascist war of conquest on Abyssinia goes forward unchecked, as the Japanese war of conquest on Manchukuo went forward unchecked, then most certainly the German Nazi aggression on the smaller countries in Europe will come next, and the imperialist war, with the German-Polish-Japanese spearhead, on the Soviet Union will follow. If, on the other hand, the Italian aggression on Abyssinia is checked and defeated, then not only is an enormous stimulus given to the national and colonial struggle throughout the world, but the first setback will have been delivered to the world expansion and war-plans of fascism, the first round will have been won in the struggle for peace against the new world war, the fascist régimes will be thrown back on themselves to face internal difficulties and rising discontent, and the conditions will have been created for the advance of the socialist struggle throughout the world. Once these issues have been clearly understood, then it manifestly follows that the decisive first question at the present moment in this situation is how to help practically the Abyssinian struggle and defeat the Italian attack on Abyssinia.

HOW can the working class act to defeat the Italian attack on Abyssinia? This is the central issue up to the present stage on which attention needs to be fixed, and every other question is relative to this. There are at any time two main lines or forms of action, closely inter-related in practice, through which the working class can bring its influence to bear on a given international political situation, so long as power remains in the hands of imperialism. The first is the direct action of the working class through strikes, boycotts, holding up of supplies, etc., both within the countries concerned and internationally organised. The second is agitation and mass pressure on the imperialist governments to pursue or abandon specific lines of policy. Both need to be brought into full play for a successful campaign. The line of the first is clear and agreed within the militant ranks, but opposed so far by the official reformist leadership. The Communist International has

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approached the Second International for united action, the Second International has so far reached the point of putting the question down on the agenda for a future meeting for consideration. This delay is desperate in the present critical situation. But this delay makes the more necessary to look for further and additional forms of action. This is all the more important, since the Italian preparations through the past twelve months have been allowed to be carried to such a point that even a widespread interruption of supplies by working class action at the present point, powerful though the weapon would be, could not alone be immediately enough to check the Italian aggression. Therefore, if we are seriously concerned to check the aggression on Abyssinia, it is essential to find the means to bring additional forces to bear for this purpose. This at once raises the question of the situation within imperialism and the possibility of utilising differences here in order to hinder the Italian attack. It is here that the controversies have arisen.

THAT every revolutionary should utilise to the utmost the contradictions of imperialism in order to assist the revolutionary and colonial struggle is elementary. Whoever does not understand this does not understand the beginning of Marxist-Leninist tactics. With the existing balance of forces, with the overwhelming superiority of imperialism if it were united, the art of utilising these differences is the art of survival ; and the whole foreign policy of the Soviet Union since its inception has been a continuous lesson in this process. The colonial peoples know this well by their own experience. Abyssinia has so far maintained its independence for forty years against the ceaseless robber plans of imperialism, not merely by its readiness to fight, but also by skilfully playing on the divisions of the imperialist Powers. To suggest to the Negus of Abyssinia, who is striving to maintain the independence of his country against imperialism, that he should not " compromise " his opposition to imperialism by endeavouring to play off one imperialist Power against another, but accept as inevitable his conquest by imperialism (" whether there is war or not, Abyssinia will lose its independence "), might appear highly laudable

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and high-principled advice in the eyes of some "left" socialists; but it is not to be wondered at if it should appear to the Negus as the advice of a decoy of imperialism. The only question is, not whether to utilise the divisions of imperialism, but to analyse them correctly at each given stage and find the most effective means of using them.

WHAT, then, are the divisions of imperialism in relation to Abyssinia? They are considerable, despite the ceaseless danger of a united imperialist front to divide the spoils. The three adjacent colonial Powers, Britain, France and Italy, have all cast covetous eyes on Abyssinia. The strongest aggressive interests are those of Britain and Italy; for Italy Abyssinia represents the main field of its unsatisfied colonial ambitions; for Britain the question is not only a question of the control of the sources of the Blue Nile, and therefore of the Sudan and Egypt, but it is also a question of preventing any other Power securing a strategically commanding position on the main line of British communications to the East. Up to the present Abyssinia has succeeded in playing off one Power against another. Italy's hopes of annexation on the basis of the Treaty of 1915 were defeated by Britain and France at the Peace Conference of 1919. When British designs were subsequently developing in the early twenties, Abyssinia invoked the aid of France and Italy, and it was on the sponsorship of France and Italy that Abyssinia was accepted as a member of the League of Nations in 1923 against British opposition. The British-Italian Treaty of Partition in 1925 broke down against French opposition through the League. In 1935, in January, France and Italy reached agreement at Rome for the free hand for Italy in Abyssinia, in return for Italian aid against Germany in Europe; and this was followed by the united front of Britain, France and Italy at Stresa. But Britain broke the Stresa front by the Anglo-German Naval Agreement in June, and thus freed the way for Italy to go forward independently. The negotiations of Britain, France and Italy at Paris in August for a joint exploitation of Abyssinia broke down in the face of Italy's exclusive claims. From this

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point British opposition to the Italian designs became increasingly vocal and active ; in September Britain proclaimed support of the League Covenant against the Italian war-plans, negotiated busily for French co-operation, and hastened strategic preparations in the Mediterranean, while at the same time continuing to offer even more favourable terms to Italy for an agreed division of the spoils.

HOW should we judge this relationship of forces and the simultaneous opportunities and dangers that it holds out ? First, French Imperialism is deeply committed to the Italian aims in Abyssinia by the Rome Agreement ; but at the same time France is even more anxious to secure British co-operation in Europe, and France is further concerned for its own interests that the League Covenant shall appear to be maintained, and shall not suffer the further damning blow of an obvious breakdown in Abyssinia, following the break down in Manchukuo. Second, British Imperialism is strongly concerned to prevent the realisation of the full Italian plans in Abyssinia, and for this purpose is prepared to proclaim fidelity to the League Covenant and readiness to participate in collective sanctions against war, at the same time as all the while endeavouring to reach a corrupt agreement with Italy at the expense of Abyssinia. Third, the smaller states are keenly conscious of the general significance of fascist aggression and the war danger to their own security, and on this basis support the League Covenant. Fourth, the Soviet Union alone proclaims full opposition to all colonial exploitation and to all war, and on this basis supports the collective enforcement of the League Covenant against any aggression. Fifth, the wide body of popular opinion in the majority of countries is sharply hostile to the Italian aggression in Abyssinia, is fearful of world war and looks expectantly to the League machinery to prevent war.

WHAT is the practical conclusion that we must draw from this line-up ? It is clear that there are two possibilities. On the one hand there is, for a whole

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variety of reasons, a considerable total of forces, both imperialist and popular, which stand for collective opposition to the Italian war on Abyssinia. On the other hand, the main imperialist powers, Britain and France, while professing support of the League Covenant and its guarantees of Abyssinian independence, are actively working for a corrupt settlement at the expense of Abyssinia. Which of these lines will conquer? It is clear that an unhesitating stand of all the countries in the League against Italian aggression on Abyssinia could by the enormously superior collective strength prevent that aggression and make it impossible. It is equally clear that the main imperialist powers will exert every effort to prevent such an outcome, as they have already done everything to shackle and weaken and delay any such line, and will seek instead to reach a corrupt bargain at the expense of Abyssinia, utilising the League forms for this purpose. This is the real issue which is only partially expressed in the question of "sanctions." In this situation there can be no question what must be our strategic line, and where we should put the weight of our agitation. We should fight for the full independence of Abyssinia against the Italian fascist attack, for the obligation of every state under the League Covenant to maintain that independence against the fascist and imperialist attack, and on this basis we cannot only exert the most powerful mass pressure of all strata of opinion upon the imperialist governments in favour of Abyssinia against Fascism, but we can direct the fight against the attempts of the National Government and Laval to unite with Italy for the spoliation of Abyssinia.

BUT this line, it is objected by some critics, means support of the National Government. On the contrary. Precisely by this line we are able to *expose* most powerfully the National Government, at the same time as mobilising the widest mass support for Abyssinia against Italian Fascism. The National Government endeavours to pose as the champion of peace and collective security and the League of Nations Covenant, and on this basis to appeal to the aspirations of millions and tens of millions in the country, while in reality

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utilising these cries for its secret imperialist aims. If we come forward as opponents, not only of the National Government and its imperialist aims, but of the whole conception of peace and collective security and collective enforcement of peace against fascist aggression, we are making a present to the National Government of the very position it wants and allowing it to appear as the champion of these aims sincerely held by millions, while we ourselves appear as useless critics and opponents of every policy, while having no proposal ourselves save abstract propaganda in an urgent practical situation (" the only contribution we can make to the solution of the problem is to build up as rapidly as possible a convinced socialist opinion in the country."—Cripps). This is not only the denial of political leadership, but is in reality the greatest practical support to the National Government. But if, on the other hand, we are able directly to voice the aims and aspirations sincerely held by millions for the collective enforcement of peace against the fascist aggression, and on this basis to expose the rôle of the National Government which professes to support the Covenant and Abyssinian independence, and is in reality working to sell out the issue, make a bargain with fascist aggression and destroy Abyssinian independence, then we drive a wedge between the National Government and its mass support, extend and deepen the front of the struggle for peace against fascism and imperialist war and strengthen the fight against the National Government.

UNDOUBTEDLY one of the main reasons why the present dangerous confusion and hesitation has arisen in the working-class movement over this issue is because the majority Labour Party and trade union leadership, at the very moment of the menace of war, has proclaimed its support of the National Government and confidence in the National Government, *i.e.*, the old social imperialist line of unity with the bourgeoisie :

> Irrespective of party, irrespective of domestic conflicts, the overwhelming majority of the nation is firmly behind the Government in the stand that it has now taken on this issue.
>
> (*Daily Herald* editorial, " The Voice of Britain," on Hoare's Geneva Speech, September 12th, 1935.)

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This is the language of 1914, the most dangerous line that could be taken by the working-class movement. So far from supporting the National Government "on this issue," and regarding the fight against the National Government as a "domestic conflict," we need to redouble the fight against the National Government precisely on this issue, on the line of its imperialist policy. But we need to fight the National Government on the correct grounds of the fight against imperialism, not on the grounds that it has proclaimed support of the League Covenant and opposition to Italian aggression (to fight on this ground would be to put the working-class line in the wrong, and imply that we are against collective opposition to the Italian aggression and for free play for the Italian aggression, *i.e.*, for the line of the fascist wing of the bourgeoisie against the National Government line), but on the grounds that the National Government has by its whole policy undermined the Covenant, assisted Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, bans the export of arms to Abyssinia, and is now trying to force on Abyssinia a settlement of imperialist servitude for the benefit of Fascist Italy. Even if at the last, reluctantly, after every delay that has played into the hands of Italy, the National Government finds itself compelled to make a show of participating in collective sanctions, probably in the most dilatory and ineffective form, the fight against the imperialist policy of the National Government will need to be conducted more intensely than ever.

THESE inner issues will need to be cleared in the working-class movement. The real fight is not the fight on pacifism, which only confuses the issues and objectively helps fascism. The real fight is the fight for the line of independent class struggle, for the independence of the Labour Movement against the line of collaboration with the National Government. This fight means at the same time the fight for the united working-class front, for international unity, for a Labour Government on the basis of the united front fight, for unity with the Soviet Union in the world political field. The first signs of the new advance and awakening to the realisation

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of the issues are beginning to show themselves throughout the working-class movement, and were revealed at an early stage in the Margate Trades Union Congress. This was particularly the case with regard to the heavy vote against the Black Circular, a vote that should have been a majority if the vote of the Transport and General Workers' Union had been cast according to its Executive's decision. A sign of change also was the reference in the Chairman's Address to the Soviet Union as "the great working-class power" and "one of the powerful factors operating against international fascism." This line, which is nothing but a recognition of plain facts, necessarily implies a complete reversal of the line "against all dictatorships, fascist or communist," "equally against fascism and communism." still voiced by a Citrine or a Morrison. World realities are daily becoming too strong for these old distortions. A world line-up is taking place: for the united working class front, for unity with the Soviet Union, against fascism and the world fascist aggression. We must exert every effort that the British working class movement shall play its part in this gathering world conflict. These issues will have to be carried to a further stage at the coming Labour Party Conference. We are approaching issues whose magnitude is still only beginning to be seen. By every means we must build the common front for the biggest testing that is before us.

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HENRI BARBUSSE

Death has taken from us one who will remain for posterity as among the greatest of the champions of humanity.

Joining up as a volunteer in 1914 *in a war which he believed to be for Right and for Civilisation he later denounced its horrors in his imperishable work "Under Fire." This book was an uncompromising exposure of the blood-bath of war and proved an inspiration to the millions of war victims who were marching forward over the frontiers ringed though they were with the barbed wire of the carnage.*

His was an outstanding conversion to socialism and one that was the result of deep reflection. Untiring were his efforts to unite together the victims of a social order, condemned by history whose latter stages are spattered with the blood of peoples hurled into the welter of war and murdered on the gallows of fascism.

As founder of the Republican Association of the Ex-servicemen of France, of the Ex-soldiers International, of the Workers' International Relief, of the League Against Imperialism, of the Association of Revolutionary Writers and Artists, he was the great promoter and leader of the international movement for the struggle against Fascism and War.

With Romain Rolland, he inspired the unforgettable Amsterdam Congress, which was a glorious stage on the road of the world coalition of the anti-war elements of all countries, all races and all tendencies. We also owe to him the European Congress of Pleyel which sounded the rallying call to the adversaries of Fascism.

Artisan of the great cause of the Unity of the Workers, of human unity, his last speech in Paris on July 14, *was an appeal for "unity of all peoples throughout the entire world for peace and liberty."*

The man is dead, but his great work lives, his disciples and followers will carry it on.

To Henri Barbusse we extend our last fraternal homage.

WORLD COMMITTEE AGAINST WAR AND FASCISM.

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THE SEVENTH CONGRESS OF THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL

By HARRY POLLITT

[*The following is an abbreviated report of Comrade Pollitt's opening speech to the London District Conference of the Communist Party, to hear a report on the 7th Congress of the Communist International.*]

THE most important Congress of the Communist International since the Second World Congress in 1920 has just concluded. In 1920, with the direct participation of comrade Lenin, the fundamental documents and theses which laid down the basis of Communist theory and practice were adopted, upon which were based the formation of the Communist Parties and the Communist International.

The Second Congress undoubtedly represented one of the most important moments in the history of the international Labour movement. But of course, it would not be true to say that in 1920 there existed a single world revolutionary Party that was able to carry out in practice the decisions of that Congress. In no country outside the Soviet Union did there exist a single united Communist Party. In every country other than the Soviet Union the revolutionaries were not only isolated in separate parties and sects, but between them the most bitter factional struggles were proceeding.

The importance of the Second Congress was the conception running through the whole of the documents that a basis must be laid down upon which it would be possible to create in every capitalist country, in every colonial country, a Communist Party, acting and carrying out the decisions of its centre—the Communist International.

The Seventh Congress of the Communist International has proven beyond all doubt that this aim has been established. And in 1935 the essential distinction between 1920 is that in two score of capitalist countries in the capitalist world, firmly united Bolshevik Communist Parties exist, working under the leadership of the Communist International on the basis of a world revolutionary proletarian party. And had this not been the case, the Seventh Congress would not have been able to unfold

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the entirely new tactical line in the development of the united front which is now going to be carried forward in every country in the world.

The new basis for united action has been opened with the deliberate perspective of leading the forms of united action in all their manifold directions, towards consciously aiming at bringing about the complete unification of the international working-class movement. The new tactical line of the Seventh Congress of the Communist International has not been determined by any opportunist reasons. It has been determined by the consciousness that the formation and strengthening of the united front is now the main link in the chain towards the successful carrying through of the world revolution. And that conscious aim of the world revolution will not be lost sight of for one moment by any Communist Party in the carrying out of the decisions of the Congress. On the contrary, everything that we do will be more consciously and in a more concrete and political way related to our final aims and final principles than ever before.

What was the first conclusion that was established? The first conclusion which the Congress was able to establish was the final and complete victory of socialism in the Soviet Union. This is not a phrase. It is not something that can be passed over as being nice-sounding. It is a historical fact which has changed the entire international situation. It is a fact which has reversed a situation, where a few years ago the Soviet Union was undoubtedly having to do many things that it did not like to do in order to get contacts with capitalist governments to try and get a breathing space, to a position where the most important Governments are now running after the Soviet Union and seeking its friendship.

It is therefore no little thing. It represents the greatest conquest for the whole working class that has been known in the history of the world. It means that the Soviet Union under the leadership of the Communist Party, is now the strongest, most powerful single country in the world.

Those who cannot see that because of this victory of Socialism there is now opening before the working class of the whole world an entirely new perspective cannot see anything. We cannot merely acknowledge the final and irrevocable victory of socialism in the Soviet Union without being prepared to draw one important political conclusion so far as our duty is concerned, and that is this: at any price and under any circumstances we will defend the Soviet Union, and in time of necessity ensure the victory of its Red Army. Comrades, when we say at any cost, and when we say at any price, we mean precisely what the words imply. If there are comrades in this hall who think that this is going a little too far then please let them enter fully into discussion on that point and we will show at the conclusion of the discussion where they are wrong, from the point of view of politics and from the point of view of building

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up any perspective of world revolution. They have not built socialism in Russia only as a result of their own efforts—they have built it as a result of the fighting character of international working-class unity behind the Soviet Union. Not only for the Russian workers and peasants have they built, and gone many ways around in the building, made many concessions and many compromises—they have done things which have made some faint hearts gasp " that the revolution has been sold out." At the end of it all, there has emerged this great and powerful socialist country that is based on socialist industrialisation, that is based on collective agriculture, that has solved for ever the problem of who was going to conquer whom in Russia—the workers and peasants under the leadership of the Bolsheviks, or the counter-revolutionaries. Because of this, it means there is not a working man or woman in any capitalist country in the world that cannot feel stronger in their fight against their own capitalist governments. In other words, the final victory of socialism in the U.S.S.R. means the strengthening of the workers' daily struggle against the attacks of capitalism, the menace of fascism and war, and the certainty of the world revolution.

To-day, when we embark upon our new line, we can do so with the certainty that those who have contributed to the hammering out of this line are precisely the same comrades who have taken such a leading part in the hammering out of the successful conquest of socialism in the Soviet Union. Also, the Seventh Congress has laid down the lines for developing the united front on a broader basis than has ever been contemplated before. Let this sink into the minds of the comrades. *If the united front can be built up, then the advance of fascism and war can be prevented.* Is there a comrade here who does not understand that ? If we can prevent any further advance of fascism or of the war mongers' plans, this represents a tremendous victory, not only for the proletariat, but for large sections of the population, who, whilst not with us in our ultimate aims, hate and fear fascism and war.

This new line of extension of the united front is not something which is being born out of the air. One of the things that dominated the minds of those who took part in the Congress when we were discussing and debating the extension of the united front tactics, was the experience gained in the last period in France. France played as equally an important part in the Congress as the Soviet Union.

What are the four main things that we already can learn from France ? First, that if united action is developed it can stem the advance of fascism on the one hand and it can compel the leading circles of the French ruling class to come to a Peace Pact with the Soviet Union on the other, and thereby gain a tremendous extension of time in which to build up the forces fighting against fascism and for the preservation of peace.

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Secondly, it has brought about the unification of the French Trade Union Movement, and on September 24 or 27 there will take place in France two conferences, one a trade union conference of the revolutionary workers. Since the French Communist Party and French Socialist Party in July, 1934, commenced to work together, this working together has brought the two trade union movements of France closer and this month, complete unification will have been brought about. We have made some concessions in order that in the trade union movement unity can be brought about. Of that there is no question, and we won't for a moment seek to hide we have made concessions, and we will make in this country the same concessions if it will remove anything standing in the way of unification of the mass organisations of the working class.

Thirdly, from our French experience, it is already demonstrated that in the immediate future there is a possibility of the unification of the French Socialist Party and the French Communist Party. This would be an event of international importance, for alongside this we have to note that the success of the united front in France has produced a grave crisis in the ranks of the Second International. The French Socialist Party is the second most powerful section to the British Labour Party, and together with the Socialist Parties of Austria, Spain, Italy and Poland, is now fighting for negotiations with the Communist International with a view to joint action.

Fourthly, and this is for us of great significance in Britain, experiences in France have destroyed the arguments of those in the Labour Party in Britain who say that if you have anything to do with the Communists you will drive away the shop-keepers, teachers, doctors, lawyers, and other sections of the middle class, as they think that Communism is synonymous with violence and bloodshed. The experience in France has given the lie to that. There has never been a time in the political history of France when the lower middle classes were so firmly allied with the organised working-class movement of France as they are at the present time. When 800,000 of the Paris population passed the Bastille on July 14, everyone knows that a big proportion of them represented precisely that section of the French population which never thought it would be drawn into such forms of mass political activity. It represented that section of the French population which, if they had been with us in Germany, would have prevented Hitler establishing a social basis previous to his coming to power. For the working-class movement in those countries which are yet known as democratic countries, this is a fact of great importance.

To sum up what is behind this extension of united front activity? First, to try and put a stumbling block, however tiny, however apparently insignificant, to put a stumbling block in the path of the fascists and

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war mongers. Secondly, to try and take away from the Labour leaders the remaining arguments they have in this and other countries which they use to oppose the united front. The Congress, therefore, in unfolding this tactic, did it on a broad basis and it is then left to the Communist Parties to apply it in the special conditions of their own countries.

For example, in the report of Dimitrov and the resolution, you will find reference to the fact that under certain circumstances we will take full part and responsibility in a united front Government which may be established. Clearly, such a perspective for Britain would be wrong, and for America it would be wrong ; but for France it may be the key to the next steps that have to be taken in France in order to bring in the whole of the left radicals, socialists, and communists into a United Front Government, not to realise Socialism but so as to impede the advance of fascism and war, and in this way to strengthen the workers' forces in France which are consciously working for the conquest of power.

In Britain it is obvious that we should aim to defeat the National Government at the coming general election and secure a Labour Government elected on the basis of the mass movement of the workers. But we cannot say that in America, because circumstances are different. We cannot say that in Poland, where the general election is now taking place, and where the Polish Communist Party and the Socialist Party have to boycott this election as they are a complete farce and give the people no opportunity of electing whom they want to take part in the so-called Polish Parliament.

What does the Seventh Congress declare as one of its main slogans ? It declares that the main slogan in the sphere of activity against war is the struggle for peace. This destroys—at least we hope it will—the canard that the Communists want war because it brings revolution. The Communists are not interested in fomenting war but are vitally interested in preserving peace. So long as capitalism is in existence war is an ever-present danger. What we have to discuss in this meeting will be how we can prevent war from actually breaking out, and we take the view that we can do this. We take the view that as a result of actions in the past it already has been done.

At the present time there is no honest person in the working-class movement who does not understand that the peace policy of the Soviet Union allied to the general anti-war activity carried out all over the world, have represented the main factors which have already either prevented an imperialist war, or a counter-revolutionary war against the Soviet Union from breaking out.

It has not been done as a result of straight-line politics, it has not been done as a result of thinking that the way towards revolution was a straight

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way. It has had to be done by manœuvring, by concessions, by compromises, but the aim has never been lost sight of. Who can forget the line of Fenner Brockway in 1932 when the Soviet Government decided to sell the Chinese Eastern Railway? What was the situation when the Russians decided to sell the railway? The situation was that Japan was ready to go to war, and the Soviet Union was equally keen to prevent war. Japan, from the point of view of its fortifications, its aerodromes, its military railways and forces in Manchuria, was ready to strike, and she said she was ready to strike because she could not get the Chinese Eastern Railway, so the Soviet Government said: "we will sell it to you." The negotiations took a year, and at the end of that year a complete change in the relation of forces had taken place, and Japan to-day can never repeat what she hoped to have carried through in 1932.

Is the world revolution stronger as a result of the Soviet Union now being able to tell Japan where to get off as far as the Far East is concerned, or would it be weaker if Japan had struck and the other powers had gone to her assistance and the revolution put in jeopardy?

The same analogy holds good to-day. Let those remnants of Trotsky here in this country who now attack this conception of the defence of the Soviet Union at any price, ask themselves one plain question. If Lenin, when Trotsky refused to sign the Peace Treaty at Brest-Litovsk and would have allowed the Russian revolution to have gone down in a welter of blood rather than sign this treacherous Peace Treaty with German imperialism, if Lenin had not said we will not only sign that Treaty, but we would sign it if it was worse in order that a breathing space is gained for us to rouse the workers outside and to provide ourselves with opportunities for strengthening our own defences here, the Russian revolution would have been crushed.

The irrevocable victory of socialism in the U.S.S.R. is a result of these tactics of the Russian Bolsheviks, and there is not an honest man or woman in this country who professes to be Socialist who can say to us that at any price and at any cost they are not prepared to defend the Soviet Union, because it is the test of our socialist faith. It may at the moment appear that this possibility is a long way off. But you see, we also have the perspective that whilst at the moment there are certain forces within capitalism which are making for capitalism getting out of the worst phase of the economic crisis, the ordinary forces within capitalism that lead to periodical trade depressions are going to meet the forces that are making for recovery much sooner than is realised. Then there will be a renewed struggle for the world market and renewed attacks on the working class of every capitalist country plus one very important factor, that when the situation arises again, then the defence of the Soviet Union will become the chief paramount consideration for every working man and woman in the capitalist countries. Because

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then, more than ever before, will the eyes of the imperialists be turned upon this socialist fatherland, this fortress of the world revolution. Therefore, we of the Communist Party of Great Britain, in line with every section of the Communist International support 100 per cent., and without any reservations everything that the Soviet Union does in its foreign policy, because we understand that this foreign policy is in accord with the interests of the international working class as a whole and is helping it forward to the path of revolution. This brings me to the question of what our line is on Abyssinia.

Those of you who read Inprecorr* this week will find the resolution on war, and will see that we definitely declared at the Seventh Congress that in a war for national liberation the Communist parties will support in that war their own ruling class in defending the attacked nation. We have Poland and Czechoslovakia in mind. Why? Because if you are prepared to surrender the independence of such countries as I have mentioned to German fascism, you are not only preparing a rod for the backs of the Russian workers, but one for the backs of the working class all over the world. In case any comrades boggle at this " at any price," let me put it even plainer. In any war on the Soviet Union by German Fascism, if it came to a conflict which meant the bloody slaughter of tens of thousands of German workers, that would be justified in the interests of humanity as a whole, because if the Russian revolution goes down, millions of humanity will be slaughtered by the fascists.

To-day, we have to apply our Seventh Congress line to a situation that demands a straight answer. It is a tricky situation, it is a complicated situation, and it is no use pretending that the key to the solution of this situation is as straight as the road to that door, because it is not.

But in this situation there is no place for those who want to take what they describe as a " negative attitude." You have to declare quite clearly where you stand. Where do we stand? The *New Leader* appeals to the opposition in the Communist Party to join up with the I.L.P. against the united front with the Labour Party, the T.U.C., the National Government and, as a member of the T.U.C. said at Sheffield, our united front with the Archbishop of York. Will they please speak here. They will be given every opportunity. We have not made a united front with the National Government. We have not made a united front with the Archbishop of York. We have not made a united front with the Labour Party and the T.U.C., but I tell you, we would be very glad if we could make a united front with the Labour Party and T.U.C. if it was on the basis of our line.

Our line was made clear at the T.U.C. this week. It is true that the comrades' speeches did not get the publicity that they deserve. What

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is our line? Are we supporting an imperialist war? We are not. We are supporting the independence of Abyssinia. Some comrades say that that is what the war in 1914 was called for. The independence of Belgium. The war of 1914 was a purely imperialist conflict. The imperialists are now doing all in their power to grab Abyssinia. There is nothing common in their aims and ours, which seek to use the contradictions that exist in the imperialist camp to put forward proposals to prevent this war. We say that the defence of the Abyssinian people is a slogan which corresponds with the interests of the working class throughout the whole world.

How do we propose that it shall be done? By unity with the National Government? We place the responsibility for the present situation upon the National Government. It was British imperialism which, when Mussolini came to power, re-armed and financed him in exactly the same way as they re-armed and financed Hitler facism when it came to power. It is the National Government which everybody knows has recently concluded the German Naval Agreement with Germany. It is allowing the Bank of England to finance Hitler in order to pay for German re-armament. It is British imperialism and its conquest of the world markets and its system of violence which must be always a provocation to those countries who are continually wanting to expand. We understand this, but let us understand the situation of the Abyssinian people.

Abyssinia is an independent country: it occupies one of the most strategical places in Africa. If Abyssinia is conquered by Italian fascism then that represents a strengthening of fascism throughout the world. If Mussolini decides to make war on Abyssinia, do the comrades here understand that Hitler is not a blind man and will immediately choose that moment for the expansion of German territory? If it is true that peace is indivisible, we must approach the question from that angle. This war would not be localised in Abyssinia for longer than a month. We stand unhesitatingly for the defence of the independence of Abyssinia which is irrevocably bound up with the defence of the Soviet Union. Perhaps Hitler would not have a go at the Soviet Union in the immediate situation, but if he has a go for Austria and Lithuania, this is the pre-requisite to having a further go at the Soviet Union later on. Are we to be blind to every phase of the situation? Of course not. Sanctions which under certain conditions we are supporting, is not the high spot of our policy. We are demanding, and demanded at the Trades Union Congress that the T.U.C. should stigmatise the National Government as the prime responsible factor for the present tense eve of war situation which exists in the world at the present time.

We called upon them to denounce imperialist aims and existing mandates and concessions in Abyssinia. We are for the immediate stopping

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of loading and unloading any Italian ships at present in English ports. We are for the prohibition of sending war materials to Italy, for the stopping of further financial loans to Italy, we call for the sending of materials to Abyssinia, for the raising of money to help the Abyssinian people fight for their independence. Do you think that we do not know the National Government has prevented the Abyssinian Government from raising a loan in the City of London, that they prevent the export of arms to Abyssinia? But we also demand the closing of the Suez Canal, and the carrying out of the Covenant of the League of Nations, because we believe that all these measures can prevent Mussolini going to war, and we must utilise the present contradictions in the capitalist world, and force economic and military sanctions if necessary.

The key-note of our drive is that by the adoption of these measures we will prevent this war. Let us look at the process as a whole. That is our line here, it is the line of the comrades in France. But it is not the line of the Italian Communist Party and Socialist Party. What is their line? Their line is transforming this war into a civil war. It is for strikes in the factories, stopping transport of munitions and troops, and for the Italian troops in Africa to desert to the side of the Abyssinian army, and even Sir Walter Citrine at the Trades Union Congress was compelled to declare that if Mussolini declares war, he faces the danger of civil war in Italy.

Don't comrades realise that if we are able to preserve the peace, that it is now going to do two things? First, it is going to strengthen the forces fighting against Mussolini in Italy itself; second, it is going to strengthen the forces in Abyssinia, not only against Italian fascism and imperialism, but against British imperialism and French imperialism.

Do you think the anti-fascist forces to-day are not stronger than they were, and if we can only hold Mussolini back we shall be rendering them a great service. When you can read that in Parma, Leghorn, Palermo, Milan and other places, soldiers have deserted, women are holding demonstrations as the soldiers leave, and that in Cremona for the first time since 1922, they are singing the "Bandiera Rossa," the Italian "Red Flag," it shows the way the anti-fascists movement in Italy is developing.

If we declare that all wars are imperialist wars under capitalism, and do not formulate our policy in relation to every concrete situation and state we must not take part in any circumstances in any war, then we are not only betraying the people of Abyssinia, we are betraying the Italian working class, the interests of working men and women all over the world.

(*To be continued.*)

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ABYSSINIA, FASCIST WAR AND THE LABOUR MOVEMENT

By JOHN A. MAHON

THE outburst of Fascist aggression against Abyssinia has aroused the Labour Movement to an understanding of the need to define and operate a policy towards the world Fascist advance and Fascist war.

The crisis has shown the serious unpreparedness of the Labour Movement for united action in this new type of emergency. The Labour Movement has to decide its attitude to Fascism and War, not to War in general but to the actual War of certain countries against others. In approaching this problem, we must do so with the understanding that we live in days which are witnessing the decisive line-up of forces against capitalism and reaction. We are taking part in a battle between the working-class and the capitalist class, and upon the result of this battle will depend the future of the human race.

The New Stage in World Politics.

World politics are no longer the preserve of rival imperialist interests. Socialism has triumphed in the U.S.S.R. The working-class has become a world power. That is the dominating fact of the present situation which completely distinguishes it from 1914. The Soviet Union is already a greater power than any single capitalist country. But the irrevocable victory of Socialism in a country with the population and resources of the Soviet Union opens up the prospect of unlimited extension. Together with the limitless increase in the well-being and happiness of the millions of workers and collective farmers, who are the Soviet Union, will go the corresponding growth of military and political power. It is no longer the spectre of communism which is haunting Europe, communism is now embodied in 160,000,000 human beings advancing at an unparalleled speed to unlimited prosperity and by the very force of this advance arousing the working class, technicians and professional men and the colonial peoples throughout the world.

The continued advance of victorious Socialism in the U.S.S.R. guarantees the eventual victory of Socialism throughout the world. That is precisely why the danger of capitalist war against the Soviet Union is now at the highest point yet reached. Capitalism is in a dilemma, it

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sees the sands running out. Every year that passes sees the relation of class forces changing in favour of the working-class and revolution. To delay the armed onslaught on the U.S.S.R. means to lose all chance for the reaction of a military victory. Therefore, the most desperate sections of the capitalist class are striving with might and main to loose the dogs of war and to gamble everything upon a military adventure against the U.S.S.R. The Fascist powers of Central Europe represent the sharpest expression of the desperation of capitalism. Utterly unable to solve the problems of their own economy they have organised their entire resources for war and war has become a necessity for the continuation of their régime.

In this situation the supreme interest of the international working class is the defence of the U.S.S.R. At all costs the stronghold of socialism must be protected from the destruction which the Fascist powers with the support of the extreme reactionaries in all countries are planning. Only the successful defence of the U.S.S.R. can guarantee the victory of Socialism in all countries.

The Fascist powers realise that their military adventure against the U.S.S.R. has only a hope of success if it is supported by the powers of the west. The Fascist and potential Fascist groups of the ruling class in Britain and France are trying their utmost to give their Fascist allies this needed support. But they encounter a tremendous weight of Anti-Fascist feeling. The experience of France shows that a united Labour movement can transform this anti-fascist feeling into such an advance of the whole people as can both hold off Fascism and open the way to a People's Government. This results in winning the forces of the French Republic away from any alliance with the Fascist powers and thereby greatly strengthens the position of the U.S.S.R. The struggle around the Franco-Soviet Pact and the mass pressure which compelled the French Government to sign this Pact show to the workers of all the democratic countries the road by which the popular anti-capitalist movement can be developed.

The Labour Movement working in this situation has the opportunity to take advantage of all the contradictions existing between the different imperialist powers. The counter-revolution seeks to build unity between the imperialists in order to go forward to attack the U.S.S.R. But the rival interests of imperialism grow in intensity as the situation becomes more acute. The victory of Socialism in the U.S.S.R. has intensified the imperialist contradictions.

By the Versailles Treaty the victorious imperialist powers sought to stabilise their predominance on the basis of the division of the colonies of their enemies and of the Hapsburg Empire. The re-armament of German imperialism has torn up this Treaty. The re-armament of

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German imperialism is on the one hand necessary for the attack on the U.S.S.R., and on the other hand becomes a factor increasing the conflicts between the imperialist powers.

The National Government of British imperialism has continually supported Fascism in Central Europe, facilitated the re-armament of Hitler Germany, and sought to direct the expansion tendencies of Germany away from the British Empire and the West towards Eastern Europe, that is, against the U.S.S.R. Any fluctuations in British policy are caused only by the need to defend British imperialist interests against the complications produced by the Fascist re-armament, but the National Government seeks ceaselessly to direct the aggression against the U.S.S.R.

The Fascist aggression upon Abyssinia is therefore no isolated conflict which can be patched up. It is the signal for Fascist aggression everywhere. Whatever steps are taken by the other powers, either to join in the partition of Abyssinia or to oppose Mussolini, the dispute over Abyssinia will be followed by disputes over Memel, Austria, Mongolia. The attitude to be taken by the Labour Movement must be decided not only by looking at Abyssinia, but by looking at the whole plans of Fascist aggression.

The peace of the world, the defence of the Abyssinian people, the future of the small, independent countries, the safety of the U.S.S.R., the preservation of the democractic rights of the Labour Movement in the west, the defeat of Fascism—these are the issues raised for the Labour Movement.

The Divisions in Labour Opinion

In this whirlpool of conflict the working class has the growing possibility of defeating its enemies. Out of the contradictions and confusion of capitalism in decay comes the opportunity of the working class. What is required by the working class to utilise this opportunity ?

First, unity of action around a policy of independent class struggle. The working class must be able to take and hold the initiative, as it has done in France. To allow itself to be drawn in the wake of its own imperialist government would be fatal. The working class must increasingly menace and intimidate its own imperialists, threatening them with its own mass action and that of the mass of the people, utilising every chance to expose the war making and fascist tendencies and preparations, isolating the imperialists by all means. For such an attitude, the united front of the working-class organisations is an absolute necessity and the united front means the replacement of the class collaboration policy, which splits the working class, by a policy of struggle which unites the ranks.

Secondly, the united working class requires a flexible policy enabling it to take advantage of all divisions in the enemies' ranks, to increase

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these divisions, to win new allies, to concentrate at any given moment, every available force against the main enemy.

Only by such means can the Labour Movement defeat fascism and advance to power and socialism.

What is the present state of opinion in the Labour Movement, as shown by the discussions, press and conferences which have dealt with the Abyssinian question? There are three clearly defined tendencies.

First, the official policy of the *Labour Party* and the *Trades Union Congress*. This is a continuation of the whole line of class collaboration. They are moving into a position of complete national unity with the National Government. Following up their support of the Jingo Jubilee and the Home Office circular on air raid precautions, they swing in behind the National Government without conducting any independent class campaign or seeking to challenge the Government with the organised forces of labour. They neglect the tremendous chance to lead the peace ballot movement forward in a real struggle for peace. They make no real preparations for the general election. They take no measures to drive Mosley and his blackshirts out of the towns and villages of this country. All these hesitations and omissions reduce the working class from an independent factor to a mere appendage of the National Government. Instead of preparing the defeat of the Government, the class collaboration leadership is steering towards some seats in a government of "national unity."

At the same time the Labour Party E.C. and the General Council of the T.U.C. have demanded action through the Covenant of the League of Nations against Mussolini. Under certain circumstances, in defence of its own interests, British imperialism may decide to sail under the flag of the League in applying economic, financial and military force to prevent Fascist Italy establishing itself as a power on the Red Sea and the route to the east. The demand for sanctions alone therefore does not represent any class challenge to the National Government. The Labour Party and T.U.C. are not organising any mass movement, any united front which would have the power to compel the National Government to open up a real peace policy, to enter the Franco-Soviet Peace Pact, to lead the League in operating the Covenant in defence not of British imperialist interests, but in defence of the peace of the world and of the Abyssinian people.

Second, there is the policy of the Socialist League and allied groups of pacifists, the policy based on the idea that the working class can remain neutral, can develop mass resistance to war in general. Sir Stafford Cripps is the chief exponent of this line and expresses it in the formula: "In an Imperialist world, imperialist methods will be used. Our reply must be to work for Socialism."

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It is true that Sir Stafford at the recent conference in London showed himself very unhappy with this position, and did not defend it with any enthusiasm. But it is a widespread tendency in the Movement.

It attracts first of all those who are downright pacifists and refuse to fight under any circumstances at all. It is possible to respect the sincerity of this point of view, but it is not possible to understand how it is going to aid in the defeat of Fascism. Nor is it possible to follow the exponents of this viewpoint in their claim for recognition of their purity of principles. Purity of principle, prepared to stand by, while an unarmed native people is massacred by all the resources of modern military science accompanied by the organised brutality of Fascism. Purity of principle prepared to stand by while the Fascist powers prepare their position for the assault on the Socialist Republic. Such principles have nothing in common with those of the working-class movement.

It is possible that the Socialist League feels this, for it tries to cover up the real meaning of neutrality by general phrases about mass resistance to war, without defining the particular war. If there is a war against the U.S.S.R., can the working class be neutral? Only if it wants to commit suicide. If in this war of imperialism against the U.S.S.R. one or more capitalist states find themselves in one camp with the U.S.S.R. against Fascist aggression, is that to be a reason for the working class being "neutral"?

The defence of the Soviet Union is instinctively felt by every worker to be a class duty. No one dare openly argue against this slogan in the Labour Movement. But the Trotskyists, with their instinctive scent for the foulest counter-revolutionary filth, are trying to undermine this slogan by saying "Yes, we are for the defence of the U.S.S.R., but not in alliance with capitalist states." This amounts to insisting that the Red Army must fight without any allies as a condition of our support. Otherwise, we shall be neutral. All the Fascists will be pleased with such neutrality.

In regard to a colonial war, the slogan of neutrality can only mean that the working class abandons its natural allies, the colonial peoples. Imperialism could not maintain its domination over the working class at home were it not for its exploitation of the colonial peoples. Imperialism uses the enslavement of the colonies as a means of continuing the enslavement of the working class at home. To free the colonies is an integral part of the freeing of the working class.

And in regard to war between capitalist states? Can the workers be neutral then?

In the war 1914-18 there was a great difference between the pacifist slogan of neutrality, of conscientious objection, and the Leninist-Marxist slogan of "turn the imperialist war into civil war." The pacifist slogans

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led to nothing but martyrdom for some individuals and a supply of labour corps for the military forces. To be neutral means to put oneself in the hand of the strongest enemy. But the Leninist slogan of struggle meant the workers should not draw aside but enter the battle, take the arms, prepare to use them for their own class, undermine the imperialist armies and services, organise the Revolution right in the midst of the armed might of imperialism. This slogan led to the Russian Revolution and changed the face of the world.

1935 is not 1914. The coming war will bear a different character.

The realisation that our attitude to the Fascist War on Abyssinia will be defined according to our conception of the approaching European war lies underneath the intense interest and heat being shown in the discussion and it is necessary to face up to the possible developments which confront us.

Here it must be said that the amendment which was carried through the Labour Monthly Trade Union Conference in London without any discussion and which declared that all wars between capitalist states are imperialist wars is not in accordance with the Marxist attitude to war. There may be circumstances in which a capitalist state conducts a war in defence of its national independence. A war of Fascist aggression by Italy or Germany upon the neighbouring independent countries would be a war directed against the national independence of those countries. In such circumstances the interests of the working class would be best served by supporting the struggle of such countries against the Fascist aggression.

Neutrality during such a conflict would simply mean allowing Hitler or Mussolini to extend their territory and to improve their military and strategic position for further Fascist aggression, both against the U.S.S.R. and the Labour Movement in the democratic countries. This can be clearly seen, for example, in the plans of Fascist Germany to attack Lithuania. This aggression is openly spoken of at the Nuremburg Congress of the Nazi Party. If this attack develops, would the revolutionary forces in Lithuania regard it as an imperialist war and raise the slogan of transforming it into a civil war ? If they took such an action it could only facilitate the victory of German Fascism ; but, in defending the independence of the country the Lithuanian workers and peasants would by no means be abandoning the class struggle, but on the contrary they would find it necessary to increase their struggle against the Fascist and reactionary elements of Lithuania, who are already openly supporting Hitler and would surrender the country to German Fascism.

Of course, the possibility is by no means ruled out of direct imperialist wars between capitalist states. In wars of this type the slogan of transform the imperialist war into civil war correctly defines the interests of the workers

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But in no possible case can we find that the position of neutrality can have any other effect than that of handing the working class over to its enemies.

The third tendency advocated at present only by the revolutionary workers is embodied in the slogan: "Mass struggle for the defence of World Peace, for the defence of the Abyssinian people, for the defence of the U.S.S.R., for the defeat of Fascism and for the defeat of the National Government." This policy takes as its starting point the need for concentration of all effort to maintain peace. The working class, both in the U.S.S.R. and elsewhere, has everything to gain by preventing the outbreak of war. Both politically and from the point of view of the loss of human life and suffering it is the working class which must pay the price for war. But the only way to maintain peace is to conduct a mass struggle against the forces which are making for war including both Fascism in Central Europe and the National Government in Britain, which has consistently made possible the establishment and the aggression policy of the Fascist powers.

Such mass struggle requires that the working class and its organisations conduct independent action against the National Government and Fascism, while at the same time leading a mass popular movement directed towards forcing the National Government to put all barriers in the way of the outbreak of war. Such barriers include the support of Britain for the Franco-Soviet Peace Pact and its leadership of the League of Nations for employing all the resources of the League Covenant to maintain peace and isolate the Fascist aggressor.

It is falsely argued that such a policy means unity of the working class with the National Government. The basis for this argument is that in the interests of British imperialism the National Government may propose the application of sanctions against Fascist Italy. This argument profoundly misjudges the position and rôle of the National Government. The National Government is posing at Geneva as the defender of peace largely because of the anti-war feeling shown for instance by the 11,000,000 votes which were cast in the peace ballot. It is seeking to strengthen its position for the coming General Election. It has not the slightest intention of using its weight either for the defence of peace or the defence of the Abyssinian people unless it is compelled to by mass pressure. As long as the peace movement remains what it is now, a mere expression of opinion, the National Government will have the room to manœuvre and to utilise the League merely as a screen for advancing the interests of British imperialism.

The People's Front in France is an example of how the united working class can develop a popular movement which can force the Government into a corner and limit its possibilities. There is no doubt that Laval

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made an agreement with Mussolini, but the mass storm in France was so great that he had to repudiate this agreement and to declare that France would stand by the Covenant. The *Observer* admits that the declaration of Laval was due to the pressure of the left in France. Of course, in making this declaration, Laval did so in a manner which showed to Mussolini his willingness to facilitate the Italian adventure. But had it not been for the mass popular movement he would have been openly the ally of Mussolini. No one with any knowledge of French politics could suggest for a single moment that the People's Front was supporting Laval because it is demanding sanctions against the Fascist aggression. On the contrary, it is only the People's Front that is fighting the Laval Government and opening up the prospect of an alternative Government.

The revolutionary peace policy proposes a whole series of measures directed towards weakening the position of Fascism both in Italy and elsewhere. Such measures require both direct action by the working class and the development of peace movements into movements of action directed against the National Government to compel it to carry forward a real peace policy.

What is the Basis for the United Action of the Labour Movement?

Do these differences of opinion mean that it is impossible to secure united action by the Labour Movement? Already, the enemies of the United Front are rejoicing because the Independent Labour Party and the Communist Party have not yet found it possible to come to complete agreement on the issues raised by the Abyssinian situation. Because the issue of sanctions has produced a peculiar line up of forces, this does not mean that the other issues cannot be made the basis of the united action which will lay the basis for as broad a movement as the People's Front in France and can lead up to the defeat of the National Government.

The issues upon which it is immediately possible to unite varying tendencies in the Labour Movement and in other movements can be summarised as follows:

(*a*) Proposals directed towards making difficulties for Mussolini.

(*b*) Proposals directed towards aiding the Abyssinian people in defence of their independence.

(*c*) Proposals exposing the imperialist aims of the British National Government.

(*d*) Proposals preparing the defeat of the National Government at the election and the return of a Labour Government.

United Action of all sections on all these points cannot be expected immediately. Each grouping contains some points on which they can act together, even if on other points there is difference. For example

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under (*a*) proposals for financial and organisational aid to the Italian Trade Unions and other Anti-Fascist organisations of the Italian working class would receive the support of all sections, whereas the proposal of sanctions would raise differences. Under (*c*) the proposal for Britain to conclude a Peace Pact with the Soviet Union on the lines of the Franco-Soviet Pact will receive the support of wide sections, including Liberals and members of the League of Nations Union who could not be expected to come out for a Labour Government.

The development of such forms of united action so that the most powerful mass movement is built up which will bring down the National Government is the main task of the revolutionary movement. While this National Government is in power the working class cannot expect from it any real defence of peace or any real fight against Fascism. If the Fascist war of aggression burst out, it will have been the National Government which made it possible by support of Hitler and Mussolini. The National Government would seek by every means to injure the Soviet Union and give as much support as it dared to the Fascist powers. It would seek to utilise the working-class hatred of Fascism to strengthen the fight of British imperialism against its rivals.

The interests of the Labour Movement and the working-class demand that if the Fascist War begins the Soviet Union shall be preserved at all costs and that military defeat be inflicted on the Fascist powers. But this demands not unity with the National Government and British imperialism but the most energetic struggle against all imperialist policies of such a Government and for its replacement by a Labour Government which can become an instrument in the hands of the mass popular movement for the defeat of Fascism.

Unity of action leading to the united front is therefore the essential requisite for the Labour Movement at the present moment. Partial actions and protests will only be able to attain their ends in the degree to which they contribute to a movement capable of removing the present Government which is the enemy alike of the people of this country, of the U.S.S.R., and of the Colonial peoples.

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THE MARGATE TRADES UNION CONGRESS

By J. B. FIGGINS

THOSE who were fortunate to attend both last year's Congress and this cannot fail to have been struck with the great rapidity with which the world crisis is maturing ; how quickly the Trade Union and Labour Movement is being forced by the progressively increasing difficulties of capitalism internationally to give concrete effect to its policy on war, formulated only last year, and above all what is most important, the response this is awakening in the rank and file as exemplified happily in growing opposition to the official Imperialist policy.

While these international anxieties principally invested this year's Congress with exceptional interest and importance it would be an unpardonable mistake to neglect to focus attention on many of the other important issues discussed. These, while they may appear separate and distinct questions, are all inter-related and form integral parts of a connected whole, and just in the measure that we appreciate and understand that fact shall we realise the urgent necessity of bending our energies on all of them incessantly and in proper proportion. They naturally, having come before Congress, are the common property of the movement, but we must guard against the serious danger of making them the be-all and end-all of our trade union activity, as this, strange as it may seem, does not promote but retards the acceptance by the workers of our fundamental aims and methods of achieving them.

President's Address and War Situation

Coinciding as Congress did with the meeting of the Council of the League of Nations and the threatening outbreak of war almost immediately, the President could not avoid, even if he wished, making a pronouncement on the Abyssinian question, which naturally occupied every mind. And what a pronouncement ! True, it was the logical and consistent application of last year's Congress decision on war, but when that is applied to the first concrete issue it exposes more than all the theoretical arguments ever could do that the present policy of the British Labour Movement is the instrument and the Labour leaders the servants of British Imperialism. But it could not be otherwise, and I am astounded to find " Marxists " who, because it proposed sanctions against Italian

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Imperialism and contained some favourable comments on the U.S.S.R. —how the official elements exploit Russia on occasion to maintain their hold on the masses when they are conscious of being in an untenable position—were not inclined to be too critical of it.* Why, the whole policy is the up-to-date expression of reformism. It is a futile attempt to restore to life the economic and political basis of reformism. But alas, history has decreed, most unfortunately for the reformist, that it shall not be so. The last war definitely marked the close of the reformist period. The inherent forces and contradictions of capitalism which have since expressed themselves naturally in the direction of nationalism and its political reflex, Fascism, must and will find their expression in ultimate war unless the workers speedily abandon their reformist illusions and fight for the overthrow of capitalism. The official policy is, therefore, not merely reformist but reactionary and, consequently, we must be ever critical and uncompromisingly relentless in our exposure of it.

It is now impossible to conceal the fact that there are great differences of opinion in the ranks of the anti-war and militant elements as to what is the correct policy to pursue on the Abyssinian issue, but there can be no two opinions among them on the President's address and the resolution which became the finding of Congress. Both completely fail to make any criticism whatsoever of British Imperialism's part in creating the present situation. One would think she were absolutely blameless, and that Mussolini alone was the villain of the piece. The President made reference to the Anglo-German Naval Agreement and its serious menace to the Baltic States and Soviet Russia, but shut both eyes to the fact that the unilateral action of Britain in making this agreement with Germany in violation of the Stresa Agreement and the Treaty of Versailles had more than a little to do with the hesitancy of France to definitely implement the Covenant. Further, he disregarded the fact that it was Britain's past policy that allowed Italy to get armed to the extent she has because of Britain's constant endeavours to weaken France's hegemony in Europe. Lastly, he very conveniently, but significantly, failed to make any reference to the fact that Lake Tsana was in Abyssinia, and that the Blue Nile which flows from it is of extreme economic value to the Sudan and Egypt ; and evidently the strategical importance of Abyssinia in connection with the very neck of the British Empire, the Red Sea and the road to India, never occurred to him as likely to have any bearing on the issue. However, as Sir Walter Citrine said in reply to the caustic criticisms of many of the delegates :

> The " National " Government could be, and was, abused every day in the week, but the General Council did not propose to bring before

*Readers are referred to an Editorial Note at the end of this article for the standpoint of the LABOUR MONTHLY on this and the further criticisms levelled by Comrade Figgins against the line taken by the opposition on the question of sanctions.

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> Congress in every resolution it submitted some new expletive, some new opprobrium of the latest misdeed of the Capitalist Government of this or any other country.

Certainly not in this, one might say, not too particular or important resolution, and moreover would comment on this choice piece of cogent reasoning of the worthy knight not rather diminish its dazzling brilliance?

The resolution—it is too long to quote—firstly and rightly condemns the imperialist aggression of Italy, but wrongly refrains deliberately from mentioning British Imperialist objects, the maintenance of which is the only reason why Britain is interested; secondly, "pledges its firm support of any action consistent with the principles and statutes of the League to restrain the Italian Government and to uphold the authority of the League in enforcing peace"; thirdly, "calls upon the British Government to urge the League of Nations to summon a World Economic Conference and to place upon the Agenda the international control of the sources and supply of raw materials, with the application of the principle of economic equality of opportunity for all nations in the undeveloped regions of the earth."

The third point regarding raw materials was greatly emphasised by Bevin, who I am convinced is really sincere in his conviction that it is possible of accomplishment, and the key to the removal of the cause of war which Bevin acknowledges to be basically economic. This was very attractive to the mind of the vast majority of the delegates who wished to be constructive and do something really effective, to eradicate the cause of war, and I believe largely accounts for this aspect not being searchingly criticised. This was a very serious mistake and one which must be immediately confessed and its effects eliminated, otherwise it will hang like a millstone round our neck threatening to drown the workers in a sea of utopian pacifism. It is quite impossible in the age of monopolistic capitalism to return to the economic basis of pre-imperialist capitalism and Manchester Liberalism and Free Trade. Here again we see the ghost of Reformism in all its ugliness and banefulness, inviting us to turn our face to the irretrievable past, whereas we must rigorously expose this illusion and focus the eyes of the workers on the glorious future.

On the other two points the militant opposition delivered devastating criticism of the General Council, and urged that the resolution be referred back for re-drafting to bring out (1) The criminal responsibility of the National Government for the creation of the menacing war situation; (2) What the policy of the Government should be; (3) The steps it should take to enforce acceptance of it on Italy through the League of Nations; (4) What measures the General Council should take independently, nationally and internationally. It was, however, not a question of reference back, but for or against the resolution, which was carried by

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2,962,000 against 177,000. Of the 177,000 the Weavers' Amalgamation was responsible for 104,000, and the Shop Assistants 25,000 votes.

With regard to (1), I have already made clear the main arguments except the rendering of financial assistance to Germany by this country. On (2) the opposition demanded that there be no ambiguity about the policy of the Government, that it stand for the independence of Abyssinia and not the carving of it out among the thieves—Britain, France and Italy—as the resolution obviously permitted. Points (3) and (4) were concerned with methods, (3) with Government measures, *e.g.*, support of League of Nations sanctions, closing of Suez Canal to Italian ships, etc. ; (4) with independent action by the workers, *e.g.*, stoppage of all war materials, refusal to load Italian ships, every assistance to anti-fascist fighters in Italy, and opposition to the National Government. The General Council avoided any reference to independent working-class action and confined itself to Government action through the League.

As I said previously, it can no longer be concealed that there is an acute difference amongst those who are opposed to the General Council, and it is, as usual, on methods. In my judgment, it is absolutely imperative in the interests of the movement that this difference is thrashed out immediately with a view to arriving at agreement. The dangerous situation ahead is too serious for division to exist in our ranks. Those of us who are convinced that the opposition is wrong can no longer remain silent. The question is did the opposition pursue the correct line ? I have not the slightest doubt in my mind that they did not. Just as the National Government is very successfully utilising the decision of the General Council to further its imperialist aims and win support in the country, so the General Council capitalised the opposition's will to fight Fascism to support the National Government urging sanctions through the League of Nations. This is just how not to fight the National Government. The correct line is to demand the resignation of the National Government on the grounds (1) that by its economic, political and foreign policy it created the war situation ; (2) That we know it will never use the League of Nations or sanctions to establish the independence of Abyssinia ; (3) that instead of fighting Fascism, it will continue its policy of doing everything to protect it and its henchmen, Mussolini and Hitler. This logically involves uncompromising opposition to sanctions meantime, and that is what is the issue. The fight against Fascism which is responsible for misleading our comrades will not be undertaken by the supporters of Fascism, the National Government, irrespective of the pressure the militants visualise themselves capable of mobilising. No, they would rather give Mussolini his own way, despite its injury to vital British interests, but let me add they don't believe themselves so impotent as to be incapable of successfully defending these interests, preferably by idealising their action through the

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League ; but if this is not possible, they evidently believe they can do so independently without giving any guarantee to act against an aggressor in a European war. Thus, they retain their full freedom to support Germany against Russia, so do not let the opposition deceive themselves that in supporting sanctions they are protecting Russia. It is quite possible, if not probable, they are doing the exact opposite. Have we, therefore, merely to content ourselves with demanding resignation of the Government and with fighting to replace it by a Workers' Government, with a policy of alliance with Russia ? No, but that is the answer to sanctions, and as there is no difference on the most energetic independent working-class action nationally and internationally there is no need to outline this again, the real important work at our hand, beyond saying that support of sanctions stultifies its development ; for obviously, sanctions, economic and military, through the League are more effective. If the workers are as easily deceived as the trade union leaders and the opposition into believing they are fighting Fascism, then naturally they like them, will prefer to take the most effective methods.

I have written extensively on the Abyssinian issue, not merely because it was the most vital issue before Congress, but because it brings right into the foreground the whole question of whether we are really unwaveringly convinced that the emancipation of the workers is the work of the workers themselves. By that, of course, it is to be understood that the workers are the only class in society capable of assuming the leadership and attracting the so-called middle class elements to its side in the fight against oppression, terrorism, fascism and war, and for human emancipation. The cultivation of this confidence in the workers themselves is our very first duty, and the day is here to do it with every reason for early and overwhelming success.

International Trade Union Unity.

The debate on the exceedingly important issue of international trade union unity demonstrated beyond all doubt that while the reactionary General Council are ever ready to draw on the action of the Russian Government on any particular question to justify their own line, they are absolutely unyielding in their opposition to any joint deliberations and working with Russian trade union representatives, even on such vital issues to the workers as War and Fascism, not to speak of conditions of labour. This, in the light of what has happened to the workers' organisations in Europe and the threatening outbreak of War at any moment, appears incomprehensible. Only appears. Again, it is the difference between revolution and reformism expressing itself. The reformists are determined to do nothing that might activise the working class, and clearly realise that association with the R.I.L.U. is going to mean something very different to solely depending on governments at the

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League of Nations jointly preserving peace as a result of enlightened self-interest. It is going to mean that the workers' eyes will be opened to the truth that the responsibility for the possible outbreak of war at any moment does not simply rest on the shoulders of capitalist governments, but equally, if not more, on the British and international trade union leaders. Their relentless opposition to international unity has resulted in an atmosphere of doubt, hesitation, and lack of confidence in the power of the workers to do anything really effective to prevent the preparation, outbreak and conduct of a gigantic war. This has had as its concomitant a growing reassurance on the part of the imperialists that they need not be too apprehensive of revolution as the inevitable outcome of another blood bath. Thus we see that it is the gross betrayal of their trust to safeguard the interests of the workers which is one of the principal causes of the ominous international crisis. This must end, and quickly. International trade union unity must become an accomplished fact at the earliest moment, and long before next year's Congress. It is our imperative duty to bring such pressure on every trade union executive, and the General Council of the T.U.C., as shall force the leaders to take the requisite steps to make it a living reality. Otherwise, the workers will not have removed one of the greatest obstacles to the radical improvement of their conditions of life. A successful struggle against Fascism for an international workers' solidarity and action may prevent war, but should it break out will guarantee that it cannot end without the overthrow of capitalist domination and an overwhelming victory for the workers throughout the world. It was not only very significant, but most encouraging, that the delegates sensed this urgent necessity of international solidarity, exemplified when they forced the General Council to implement the magnificent reception by Congress of the Greetings of the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions of the U.S.S.R. by sending a telegraphic reply in suitable terms expressing the warm sentiments of the British movement.

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A COMMENT BY THE LABOUR MONTHLY

IT will not be lost on our readers that Comrade Figgins is opposing sanctions on quite different lines from the I.L.P. and the Socialist League. These bodies will have it that British Imperialism is anxious for war on Italy and that sanctions if imposed will lead to war.

Comrade Figgins on the contrary says that the National Government "(1) *By its economic, political and foreign policy created the war situation.* (2) *That we know it will never use the League of Nations or sanctions to establish the independence of Abyssinia, and* (3) *That instead of fighting Fascism it will continue its policy of doing everything to protect it and its henchmen, Mussolini and Hitler.*"

Comrade Figgins agrees with the general line of working class action against Italian fascism, i.e., Trade Union action to stop supplies to Italy. But what line of working class struggle, or of broad peace struggle against the National Government does he propose? He says that we must "demand the resignation of the National Government." True, but we must mobilise the working class for the fight to force the resignation of the National Government. We must pursue a line of tactics that will prove to the masses of this country the pro-fascist, anti-peace character of the National Government.

How are we to do it? Here is the League of Nations meeting. The Soviet Union and the smaller States are demanding drastic action against the Fascist war on Abyssinia. The National Government, Comrade Figgins declares, is really pro-fascist, and is seeking a deal with Mussolini. It is obvious that in this situation the working class movement must pursue an active rôle. It is obvious that it must rouse the big peace movement to play an active rôle against the Government.

What must the movement seek to force the Government to do? The I.L.P. and the Socialist League say the movement must bring pressure on the National Government in favour of a policy of "no sanctions," that is to say, of a policy which means the desertion of the peace forces of the League and the lining up with that section of reactionary French and British Imperialism which wants a free hand for Mussolini. Does this expose the National Government as the enemy of peace? No, it helps to conceal its sabotage of a real struggle for peace by so enabling it to declare that it was the people themselves who were strongly against any action, directed against Italy.

The militants whose policy Comrade Figgins criticises take the line that the workers' movement generally must demand that the National Government line up with the peace forces in the League, and that it co-operate with them in imposing an embargo on all goods going to or coming from Italy, and that

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it close the Suez Canal. If the National Government is forced along this line after repeated wobblings, this will strengthen the world forces for peace, and will stimulate the mass movement at home to bring down that Government. The more the Government shows its desire to run away from any effective action against Mussolini, the more the mass movement against it will grow, the easier it will be to bring it down.

Therefore on Comrade Figgins' premises, which we believe are in the main correct, the " no sanctions " policy works along the lines the National Government is going, and helps it. The " sanctions policy " mobilises the movement to make positive peace demands upon it, to struggle against it, and thus to bring it down.

The suggestion of Comrade Figgins that if Mussolini is given a free hand by the Governments in the League, that this will be less likely to injure the interests of Soviet Russia, than the application of sanctions will, is simply incomprehensible. There is Hitler taking up an aggressive attitude to Russia. He is watching what is going to happen to Mussolini. Is it not clear that if Mussolini is strongly opposed by the League States, Hitler will hesitate, while if Mussolini gets a free hand Hitler will be encouraged?

There can be no fight for the resignation of the National Government unless we make peace demands upon it. The only effective peace demands are that it abandons imperialist bargaining over Abyssinia and lines up with the peace States in the League in opposing Mussolini's war by means of effective sanctions.

Any other policy at this stage will strengthen the hand of the National Government and encourage those capitalist Powers who are out for an immediate war.

EDITORIAL BOARD.

[*Owing to pressure of space a number of contributions have had to be held over till next month, including a criticism of John Strachey's reply to the review by Emile Burns of his book* THE NATURE OF THE CAPITALIST CRISIS.]

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Conference on Trade Union Problems and Policy

I. INTRODUCTORY ANALYSIS

ON August 24 and 25, at the Bermondsey Town Hall, the Conference on Trade Union Problems and Policy was held under the Chairmanship of Councillor Bowyer of the Romford Urban District Council. This Conference proved even more successful than any of the previous conferences held by the LABOUR MONTHLY, no less than a total of 365 delegates being appointed from all sections of the trade union movement. The following is a summary of the Credentials Report, taking into account the fact that this is the total appointed, a number having found themselves unable to be present.

	No. of organisations.	No. of delegates.
Executive Committees	2	4
District Committees	5	11
Area Committees (A.E.U.)	3	5
Branches (28 Unions)	147	282
Shop and Works Committees	16	47
Trades Councils	8	16
	181	365

In addition to the two resolutions passed at this Conference, letters of solidarity were forwarded to the strike committees at Kelsey Hayes and Weddells, and a telegram of sympathy was sent to the relatives of the miners killed in the accident at the South Kirkby Colliery, Yorkshire.

It was further decided on the recommendation of the Standing Orders Committee to hold a Recall Conference to hear a report of those delegates of the Conference who had been appointed as representatives of their Unions to the Margate Trades Union Congress. This Recall Conference, under the Chairmanship of G. Kempton (E.C., Furnishing Trades Association), was held on September 21 at the Essex Hall. It had been decided at the previous Conference, on the invitation of the French Trade Union Federation (C.G.T.U.), to ask branches to elect delegates to that Federation's Conference which was to be held on September 24—27, and out of which it was expected that the unity of the two French trade union federations would be achieved. The delegates so chosen were submitted to this Recall Conference and nine were endorsed. At this Conference also a message of greetings was unanimously passed for the elected fraternal delegates to take to the Paris Conference. The number of delegates present at this Recall Conference were :—

	No. of organisation.	No. of delegates.
Executive Committees	2	3
District Committees	3	6
Area Committees (A.E.U.)	2	2
Branches (from 26 Unions)	104	143
Shop and Works Committees	5	8
Trades Councils	8	10
	124	172

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Some 39 speakers took part in the discussions at the first conference, and 22 in the Recall Conference discussions. In order to give an adequate report of these discussions it has been decided, owing to very great pressure of space to divide the discussions at both Conferences, and, in view of the importance of the subject, to give this month the discussion on War and Fascism, holding over the discussion on the Economic Problems of Trade Unionism till the next issue, together with the letter from Comrade R. P. Dutt to the original Conference.

The resolutions passed at both these Conferences are, however, given here in Section III. in full:—

II. SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS ON WAR AND FASCISM

(1) BERMONDSEY ON AUGUST 25th.

W. Payne (Dalston (Bus) Br., Transport and General Workers), in opening the discussion on Fascism and War, stated that he thought that the Conference could not do better than to take into account the material that had been issued by the LABOUR MONTHLY to all delegates on this question. He considered that the position was really grave as shown by the fact that the National Government had been calling into consultation the leaders of the opposition. Referring as an old Trade Unionist and as a branch secretary for the last twenty years to the acceptance by the Unions of the 1931 reductions, Bro. Payne contrasted the increasing expenditure on war since then, rising as it had done by £19,000,000 since 1932. He pointed out that we must remember that in this country, while the Government is saying that they are a peace government, one third of the war output of the world is produced. He contrasted the appeal of Herbert Morrison to submit to the gas drill preparations of the Government with the published statements that there has never been a gas mask discovered which can keep out the latest kind of gas. He stated that if the Government had taken a stand in the League of Nations and prevented Japan from doing what she did in China, he believed that the Italians would not have taken the present advantage of the League of Nations. He considered that this Conference must decide to be absolutely united in seeing that the Labour and Trade Union Movements do not stand in the way of an absolute united front of the workers against the present war menace. He welcomed the indication of the speakers in the previous discussion showing that in opposition to the Labour and Trade Union leaders the mass of the workers were learning from the experience in Germany where, before Hitler came to power, it was absolutely true to say that if the social-democrats had joined hands with the communists as they were asked to do, they could easily have stopped the advance of Nazism. After referring to the fact that even at the last conference of his Union, the Transport and General Workers, the leaders had spoken against the United Front in France, it was only after twenty-six applications had been made that the Socialists there agreed to form a united front with the Communists. This agreement has so far led to over 300 united trade union branches being formed in France. In conclusion, after saying that he was satisfied that the only salvation of the people in this country lay in following the line of the U.S.S.R., he referred to the agitation against Part II. of the Unemployment Insurance Act as showing that it was the mass agitation of the workers that secured its withdrawal, while the great majority of the Trade Union leadership was sitting on one side. Everyone of us represents a large number of workers, and it is possible for us to do anything. The time of this Conference will have been well spent if out of it decisions are taken in favour of a united front of the working class.

J. Hanson (Brixton No. 3 Amal. Engineering Union) pointed to the fact that, in a war situation as the machines will most probably be manned by juvenile labour, youth becomes a very important factor in the fight against war ; again as Fascism gets its support from youth they are likewise important in that aspect of the struggle. Consequently he considered that definite steps should be taken to organise the youth into the trade union movement ; first by breaking down the opposition between the men and the youth in the factory, by putting forward a separate programme for the youth which will get the support of the older trade unionists. Secondly, there should be in each Union a youth section having a low membership contribution. Thirdly, there should be social and sports activities for the youth. Fourthly, the demand should

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be made for the provision of technical education for the youth in order to prevent the blighting of the lives of the youth which so often occurred when they get sacked at a certain age from blind alley occupations. Bro. Hanson appealed to all delegates, in conclusion, to take up the struggle of the youth in their branches, so as to organise the youth against war and fascism.

L. Gregory (Brixton br. Electrical Trades Union) pointed out how since fascism means the breaking up of the trade unions it was necessary that the trade union branches should be linked up with the factories ; in this activity the youth must be represented. He suggested that every delegate should see that in his branch job grievances were raised, and secondly that he should work for the building of a fully representative job organisation.

The next delegate was **Bro. Pappianou (1/622** branch Catering Section, Transport and General Workers). Speaking as a Cypriot he pointed out how in Cyprus British imperialism had made it so safe for democracy that if you were caught reading Anatole France you got several years in gaol. The workers in the anthracite and copper mines are receiving from 1s. to 1s. 4d. per day ; it was a fact that employers here had been able to give concessions to British workers out of the enormous profits made from the exploitation of the colonial and semi-colonial workers such as these miners. He suggested that executives of the trade unions here must be got to see that trade union principles and organisation are recognised by the employers in the colonies, in order that the fight of the whole working class in the empire is united in struggle against British imperialism. The Seamen's Union must be forced to see that the Lascars and other colonial workers, everywhere receive the same rate of pay as white seamen.

C. Crawley (Harrow Trades Council) considered that the fight against Fascism and War are the two important questions of the moment. He considered that if it suited England to stop this war on Abyssinia the National Government could stop it to-morrow. It is up to the Trade Union movement to get together with other working-class movements to see that it is stopped. We have got to get co-ordination between ourselves and the colonial workers ; we will be fighting ourselves if we allow the colonial workers to be exploited by the capitalists.

W. Shadbolt (3rd, 4th and Central brs., Wolverhampton, Amal. Engineering Union) stated that he was much alarmed by the speech of Bro. Payne ; he never thought that the situation was so grave ; he thought that in view of the Peace Ballot figures no government would have allowed itself to ignore, which according to Bro. Payne they have done. He warned the Conference that many of the youth were looking upon the next war as a sport, and we must see that we get solid support for whatever policy the Trade Union movement brings forward to combat war, remembering that the young people are looking to us to help them in this crisis. In conclusion he said : " If I can take back the spirit of this Conference, I am sure we in Wolverhampton can do good work in the Trade Union movement in the fight against war."

T. E. Botting (Reading Branch, Amalgamated Engineering Union), speaking as a member of the League of Youth as well as a trade unionist, pointed out how in a not very advanced district like Reading the Co-operative youth, the League of Youth, the Young Communist League, supported by the Clerks and the Engineers, had been able to set up a Youth Peace Committee with the aim of welding together all the elements standing for peace. We must remember that in view of the hard time the youth are at present going through, as in South Wales where many of them have never worked at all, and are consequently becoming demoralised, there is a danger of them being used by the fascists for building up the forces of reaction. He appealed to the Conference delegates to see that the youth resolution put forward by the youth delegates was passed by the Conference and definitely carried out, and especially that youth sections were set up in their trade unions.

John Mahon (Editorial Board, LABOUR MONTHLY) emphasised the importance of the fight in the field of ideas in the struggle against fascism and war. He considered that in the complicated situation of to-day it was necessary for us to be equipped to solve all questions and to give leadership, otherwise we would be disarming ourselves and our class in the face of the enemy just as much as if we left the unions. He maintained that Marxism was that system of ideas and understanding which would provide this equipment. The LABOUR MONTHLY which stands as an organ of Marxism has therefore a vital rôle to play in presenting Marxism in a form dealing with the concrete problems facing the workers. If instead of the 6,000 odd readers to-day there could be 50 or 60,000 active trade unionists reading, studying and contributing to our journal, would there not be a tremendous strengthening for the working-class movement of this country ? In order to give an indication of how Marxism was not as some thought merely something for theoreticians and nothing to do with the ordinary

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bread and butter struggle, Mahon quoted from a compilation of A. Lozovsky (*Martin Lawrence*, p. 18, 5s.), giving Karl Marx's views on trade union problems, in which Marx said: "In addition to their original tasks the trade unions must now learn how to act consciously as focal points for organising the working class in the greater interests of its complete emancipation. They must support every social and political movement directed towards this end. By considering themselves the champions and representatives of the whole working class and acting accordingly, the trade unions must succeed in rallying round themselves all workers still outside their ranks." If we can get this understanding of Marxism which shows how to-day in every situation the decisive rôle is played by the working class and how the workers only become a class when they act against their enemies, we will be able to tackle such problems as Abyssinia and the danger of the National Government. We want the widest possible front of the workers to stop the fascist attack on Abyssinia; so we are demanding a special Trades Union Congress. If we understand that the actions of the working class are decisive, we can confidently say that the National Government cannot be regarded by the workers as the custodian of peace. Consequently in the interests of peace we must make certain of their defeat and their replacement by a third Labour Government. If we can carry out what Marxism implies at this moment, that is the mobilisation of the existing organisation of the working class, we can rapidly arrive at a point where we can give such help to the Italian anti-fascist fighters as will lead to the destruction of fascism in the whole of Europe. The immediate step to this is the canvassing in all the streets and houses of London to win the workers for the victory of a United Front of Socialism in the General Election.

J. Torode (E.C., Sign, Glass and Ticket Writers), emphasised the importance of securing the defeat of the National Government, especially in view of the fact that it has always come out against those sections of the working class and of the whole population who have been working for peace. Such a defeat would mean not only a victory for the workers here, but a great message of hope to the workers all over the world. He suggested that if the tremendous ferment that had shown itself against Part II. of the Unemployment Insurance Act had been kept up, the National Government would already have been defeated. In carrying out the decisions of this Conference we must have as our aim the defeat of this Government and the establishment of a third majority Labour Government.

The next speaker, **Bro. H. Campbell** (Clerkenwell and Hoxton br., Amal. Soc. Woodworkers) considered the Conference had been very valuable as it had brought together a whole number of trade union delegates to discuss questions concerning them as trade unionists. He suggested that the trades council delegates should go back and call similar conferences in their areas to this one. He considered that the workers were not yet alive to the fact that the present mobilisation of Italy against Abyssinia threatened a bigger world war than in 1914-18; as, for instance, on his job in the mass room, out of dozens of discussions it had been impossible to get in the last three weeks any really serious one on Abyssinia. He considered the whole of the trade union movement should immediately be brought into action on this question and supported the calling of a special T.U.C. on the war situation.

M. Lane (Westminster Trades Council) suggested that most of the delegates had not indicated sufficiently what steps should be taken against fascism and war. In his Council they had decided not merely to pass a resolution against the Government air raid drill at the Council, but to see that every branch discussed the question first.

C. M. Westbrook (S.W. Gen. Br., Nat. Union of Clerks) suggested that, in order to carry the fight against war and fascism into the branch room, members doing this must first prepare the way by carrying on a fight for the immediate demands of the workers. He described how this had been done in the Clerks', and as a result a definite change was taking place in the whole policy of the Union on fascism.

W. Payne, in replying to the discussion, questioned whether the delegate who said that the National Government would not go to war in the face of the Peace Ballot figures, was not a bit too optimistic. With regard to the question of International Trade Union Unity and the fact that there was great division still existing, he considered that the General Council had been the biggest obstacle in the way of healing this division. He supported the idea of a special T.U.C. Congress on the war menace but in addition to passing a resolution in favour of this delegates in their own areas must organise peace councils. These, he considered, were the two chief things to do in the present situation, and delegates can get them popularised, for instance, through the rank-and-file movements.

The Conference then unanimously adopted the principal resolution as drafted

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and amended in the Standing Orders Committee (see conclusion of reports for text).

The first speaker in the discussion on the special resolution on Abyssinia was **Bro. M. Jacobs** (No. 15 Branch, Furnishing Trades Association). He asked the Conference to be careful not to be swayed by arguments to persuade them to take sides in a capitalist war merely because one country happens to be fascist and the other to be Abyssinia ; on the question of offensive and defensive wars the labour and socialist movement has always been split from top to bottom. It was our job in Great Britain, in order to deal with the Abyssinian question, to direct the attention of the workers to the enemy at home ; we should not try and answer the question of aggression or defence in such a war between two capitalist countries as this one would be, but we should declare to our enemies at home that in any war which we consider to be a capitalist one we would call upon the whole working class to convert it into revolution and civil war.

After several interjections and questions **Bro. A. Gossip** (E.C., Furnishing Trades Association), declared that in his opinion under no circumstances should the workers of this country go to help the British Government if they were to go into a war with another imperialist country, no matter whether they had the League of Nations behind them or not.

In the subsequent discussion **Bro. J. Torode** combated the implication in Bro. Jacobs' speech that the threatened war of Italy on Abyssinia was a capitalist one, as it was in reality a fascist aggression against a colonial country. In such a situation it was a solemn duty of the international labour movement to put every obstacle in the path of Italian fascism in its attack on Abyssinia. He suggested that if the British labour movement brought pressure to bear on the National Government to force the closing of the Suez Canal and the operation of other kinds of economic blockade, they would have carried out the most successful action of solidarity of the working class for many years.

Up to this point the discussion had shown that a mistake had been made in not bringing forward the resolution on Abyssinia at an earlier stage in the Conference, and many delegates had in consequence suggested that the discussion be either extended or the Conference adjourned without the resolution being put.

In view of the impossibility of extending the time of the Conference, and in view of the fact that it was felt to be most inadvisable to allow the discussion to conclude without a further effort being made to get the delegates clear as to what should be the attitude on this most important question of the threatened war on Abyssinia, the Editorial Board of the LABOUR MONTHLY obtained the permission of the Standing Orders Committee for Bro. John A. Mahon to make a statement on Abyssinia at this point on behalf of the Board, to which Conference agreed.

In this speech which is here very briefly summarised in view of a contribution by him on this subject appearing elsewhere in this issue, **Bro. Mahon** first pointed to Abyssinia as a cockpit of struggle between Britain, Italy and the other imperialist Powers. At the same time it is the last remaining independent African State, it is a symbol of the independence of the coloured peoples of Africa ; it is a symbol against imperialism. To allow the successful expansion of Fascism in Africa would open the door to the expansion of Fascism throughout the whole world. So those who say : " Don't interfere," are assisting Fascism. A war between Mussolini and Abyssinia cannot be localised, it would be the beginning of a European or a World War. British Imperialism is trying to use the League of Nations to stop Mussolini. What in this situation must be the policy of the working class, understanding that it is an international class and that the colonial and semi-colonial peoples are one of its allies against imperialist domination. If the working class stand aside, we allow Fascism to strengthen itself, to gather its forces to attack the Soviet Union, and for aggression against the working class in those countries where Fascism does not yet rule. First, therefore the British trade union movement should aid the re-establishment of the Italian trade union movement. Secondly it must move to obtain united action internationally for the stoppage of the transport of munitions, thirdly it can bring pressure, as in the case of Part II. of the Unemployment Insurance Act, to compel the National Government to act for peace, first by entering the Franco-Soviet Peace Pact, secondly getting the League of Nations to close the Suez Canal, withdraw all financial aid to Italy and so prevent Italian Fascism from making war. In answer to those who say that the Soviet Union should not defend itself in alliance with capitalist countries there is no Marxist who would, supposing Hitler attacked the Soviet Union, be against France, a capitalist country, being forced to honour the Franco-Soviet Pact in support of the defence of the Soviet Union. Marxism has never denied the right of colonial countries to defend themselves by force

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of arms against Imperialist aggression. We must utilise all forces to stop the Fascist aggression on Abyssinia.

The resolution was then put to the vote and was carried with 4 votes recorded against it and a number of abstentions.

(2) RECALL CONFERENCE, SEPTEMBER 21st.

The discussion on the War situation at the Recall Conference on September 21 arose out of the report of **Bro. W. Zak** (No. 2 br., Furnishing Trades Association) on the results of the Trades Union Congress. Bro. Zak pointed out that the first thing to be noticed about the Congress discussion on War was that neither the President nor the General Council had any lead for action by the working class against war. The policy of the General Council was to line up with the National Government in demanding sanctions, and they attempted to suggest that their policy was the same as that of the Soviet Union. In opposition to this one group of delegates put the passivist point of view. Another group of militant delegates demanded: (*a*) respect for the Scarborough Congress decisions demanding complete colonial independence; (*b*) support to Italian workers; (*c*) stoppage of transport of munitions; (*d*) stoppage of loading or unloading Italian ships; (*e*) ban on export of arms to Abyssinia be removed; (*f*) closing of the Suez Canal; (*g*) surrender of all British mandates, etc.; (*h*) General Council to convene an emergency international conference of all working-class organisations; (*i*) a Workers' Control Commission to control the munition production of this country; (*j*) a wide campaign of enlightenment by General Council. Bro. Zak, considered that a large number of the votes (2,962,000 to 157,000) were cast by those who wanted to signify that they were prepared to fight for peace.

In the discussion on this report **Bro. J. Torode** (E.C., Sign, Glass and Ticket Writers), moved the resolution on Abyssinia. He suggested that everyone would agree that it was unfortunate that at the last Conference they did not have a great deal of time to discuss the Abyssinian resolution. He considered that there would be general agreement that if Italian Fascism successfully carried through their aggression on the practically defenceless peoples of Abyssinia it would set fire to the forces of European reaction and make for war on the small States of Europe which, if carried through by German Fascism would open up an attack on the Soviet Union. He pointed to the fact that the workers had in 1920 prevented the Polish attack on Russia, and in 1933 saved the life of Dimitrov, so the workers of Europe can do a great deal to prevent this second European war. Therefore every possible measure must be taken to get independent working-class action. Secondly, we must bring every kind of pressure to bear on the League of Nations to operate both economic and military sanctions against Italian Fascism. This definition of the meaning of sanctions has been made necessary if only by the fact that Mussolini, it is obvious, has been banking in the last few days on a half-hearted application of sanctions. Bro. Torode emphasised this as a very serious question. In this is bound up the question of securing the defeat of the National Government as the main enemy of the working class.

H. Berger (Holloway br., Shop Assistants' Union), declared in seconding the resolution that unless the working class could find a solution to this question which was splitting their movement from top to bottom there would be an immediate rise in the political stock of fascism in this country. In helping this semi-colonial country to maintain its independence we are dealing a smashing blow not only to Italian imperialism, but to every other imperialism.

Bro. A. E. Smale (Hornsey br., Locomotive Engineers) claimed that there was no need for military sanctions as economists have maintained that Italy could be bottled up in a fortnight; besides Italy will find in Abyssinia a very tough nut to crack. He maintained that it was not our fight. If it does come to the time when Italy proves stronger than we expect and the fight spreads elsewhere through to Russia, then is the time we can take part in the fight.

C. Crawley (Harrow br., Amal. Soc. Engineers) maintained that the only fight he was prepared to back was one to take the capitalist talons out of Abyssinia or save the workers' country for the workers.

Mary Hughes (Spitalfields br., Municipal and General Workers), speaking as one who had lived for 36 years in the midst of Whitechapel, warned the Conference to be careful when we talk of war; in Whitechapel, for instance, the horrors of the last war still existed in practically every house.

W. E. Baldwin (Stratford No. 2, Nat. Union of Railwaymen), supported the resolution and suggested that in view of the fact that fascism was preparing this aggression, if some say they will support one kind of sanctions and not another, then it means that they are opposed to sanctions.

Addressing his remarks to one of the young delegates who had already spoken,

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Bro. B. Armstrong (1/120 Clerical and Supervisory Section, Transport and General Workers' Union), asked him to note that he himself had been through the last war and knew what war means, and after carefully studying the present situation which must be viewed from day to day, he was wholeheartedly in support of sanctions.

The next speaker, **Bro. M. Jacobs** (No. 15 br., Furnishing Trades Association), asked the Conference to note the steady progress that was being made towards jingoism. He maintained that events had proved that he was right when he warned the Bermondsey Conference that sanctions mean not peace, but war. Mussolini, he maintained, would not withdraw for fear of sanctions. He is goaded on from fear that if he withdraws he will be faced with civil war at home. Bro. Jacobs maintained that as a result of demanding sanctions Germany has been thrown into the arms of Italy, and with them lined up with Poland, that will mean you have done a great disservice to the Soviet Union. While heartily endorsing all the points in the resolution, except No. 3, he put the alternative of taking independent working-class action to so embarrass our enemies at home that they will find it impossible to embark on war. He felt that by demanding sanctions the National Government has been given an absolute walk over at the next election.

Another speaker suggested that first of all terrorism should be stopped as practised by British imperialism, *e.g.*, in South Africa, where he had seen native dockers, who were paid 1s. a day, being whipped up the plank as they loaded British ships.

Bro. M. Bass (Bethnal Green 1/414 br., Transport and General Workers) considered we could not sit back and see the the colonial workers in Abyssinia slaughtered for their fight was just as much our fight as the miners' fight was. We cannot help it if British Imperialism also wanted Italian Imperialism kept out of Abyssinia. We must not be half-hearted about our demand for sanctions.

A. Gossip (E.C., Furnishing Trades), declared that if Italy gets into Abyssinia and defeats her then there is no doubt whatever in my mind that it will give a fillip to fascism. On the other hand, whilst agreeing to economic sanctions and even going to the length of closing the Suez Canal by one means or another, I certainly am not prepared to advocate war. If we are in favour of military sanctions we ought to be prepared to support the Government's gas drill.

At this point, in view of the number of speakers still wishing to take part in the discussion, the chairman announced that an extension of time had been obtained.

The next speaker, **B. W. Neville** (Cab Section, Transport and General Workers), considered that some had missed the international character of fascism, and the fact that if we do not defend Abyssinia it will mean we are driving ourselves as well as workers elsewhere into the slave camps of fascism.

Bro. Woodroofe (Paddington br., Locomotive Engineers branch), after emphasising the importance of supporting the Italian workers in rebuilding their unions, as well as Abyssinia, he declared that if sanctions mean I have got to join the army to-morrow and go out to Abyssinia, I will use all my power not only to defeat the Italians, but to corrupt the British armed forces.

R. Bridgeman (League Against Imperialism), drew the delegates' attention to Comrade Litvinov's statement to the League Assembly, that he would spare no effort and hesitate before no decision which would avoid a conflict.

J. Jacobs (No. 15 br., Furnishing Trades Association), declared that military sanctions may mean war, but the absence of sanctions definitely means war. Brother M. Jacobs talks as if the National Government were in favour of sanctions. All this is talk in Geneva ; their object is to find a way of splitting up Abyssinia without war. We can make the National Government support sanctions just as we made them withdraw the unemployed relief scales.

P. Sowden (Brixton No. 2 br., Amal. Soc. Woodworkers), said the only logical course was for the workers to organise mass opposition to war ; there is no decent solution in coming out in support of the League of Nations. He was opposed to lining up with the Labour Party in support of the Government, and the Communist Party will be equally accused of being behind the National Government. The problem you have to solve is what attitude are you going to take when France and Britain start dishing out Abyssinia ? I say we have to take the same action as we did to defend the Soviet Union, *i.e.*, mass action.

J. Torode, in replying to the discussion, said he thought that it could be claimed that the overwhelming majority of the delegates in the period between the last and this conference have thought over the question and reached the same conclusions as the Editorial Board. We believe it possible for the working class of Britain and Europe to bring such pressure to bear on their governments as will prevent the outbreak of war. If we oppose

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sanctions it is going to give a clear field to Mussolini, and if he is given a clear field Hitler has made it clear that he will take advantage of this to push forward into Memel and the Ukraine. Let us be quite clear that before we reach the stage of military sanctions the working class can do many things. Let all delegates go back to their organisations and get them to carry out those parts of the resolution with which they are in agreement, and if they do this we are convinced their experience will lead them to get clear on exactly what we are driving at.

The resolution as amended by the Standing Orders Committee was then put to the Conference, each point being taken separately. All of them were carried unanimously except for point 3, to which there were 11 votes recorded against.

III.

PRINCIPAL RESOLUTION ADOPTED AT BERMONDSEY CONFERENCE

(AS AMENDED)

This Conference of Trade Union delegates, on summing up the discussion of Trade Union problems in the LABOUR MONTHLY and in the discussion in the Conference itself, resolves:

That it is in the best interests of the trade union movement for all trade unionists to work within the Unions (factories, branches, districts, executives, delegate conferences and T.U.C.), for the adoption of the following policy to develop the Unions as fighting organisations for the betterment of the interests of the workers and against the attacks of the employers and the capitalist government.

WAGES, HOURS, RATIONALISATION

(1) A conference of Executives to organise a joint campaign of all Unions and Trades Councils in support of the demands of the Unions; to act in concert in presenting demands and exerting pressure on employers and government; to prepare sympathetic action for any Union involved in dispute.

(2) Branches and District Committees to use their resources to campaign now in the factories against speed-up and low wages, for wage increases and better conditions. With the recognition of the workshop as the key unit of organisation there should be the maximum of effort to obtain 100 per cent. Trade Union organisation, by strengthening the shop stewards and works committees, directly linking these committees with the Union branches.

(3) To work for termination of existing agreements which prevent or stifle the workers from going forward for wage increases and shorter hours, and to organise summoned meetings and mass meetings to prepare action for wage increases and shorter hours.

(4) Unrecognised or unofficial strikes, or strikes of unorganised workers, to receive immediate attention of the Unions with a view to securing 100 per cent. trade union membership and recognition, improved conditions, and solidarity measures.

(5) *Trade Union campaigns for the* organisation of women and of the youth should be begun and supported with the whole weight of the movement.

(6) The detrimental effects of rationalisation upon employment, wages and conditions should be opposed by the Unions. The principle of negotiations concerning such effects to take place before the introduction of new machines or processes should be established.

(7) To work for the adequate provision of safety precautions in all factories, for the rigid application of all laws protecting workers' health and safety, and for the right of the Unions to send representatives to inspect the conditions in all factories and make recommendations.

TRADE UNION DEMOCRACY

(8) To secure to the Unions the maximum strength and unity in the struggle against the employers and the capitalist government. Black Circulars and similar disruptive documents should be rejected. Democracy is the breath of life to the trade unions and should be extended and not infringed.

UNEMPLOYMENT

(9) Defence and improvement of the standard of living require the utmost unity between employed and unemployed. The trade unions should demand provision of work schemes on a national scale at trade union rates and conditions, and the abolition of the Means Test, Part II. of the Unemployment Act, and the test and task work and training centres.

WAR AND FASCISM

(10) Understanding that Fascism and War would mean the destruction of the trade unions, the breaking down of rights and standards won by years of struggle

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and the introduction of industrial conscription, the Trade Unions should strive to oppose these deadly enemies with all the resources of a united working class.

(11) The Trade Unions should exert pressure on the Government to compel it to follow a real Peace Policy and not merely to use the League of Nations as a screen for the interests of British Imperialism. Such a policy would find expression in joining the Franco-Soviet Peace Pact and proposing in the League of Nations joint action to stop the Fascist war on Abyssinia.

(12) The Trade Unions cannot rely on a capitalist government to maintain peace and dissolve the Fascist organisations. The defeat of the National Government in the approaching election and replacement by a Labour Government would be a decisive blow for peace and democratic liberties. A strenuous fight should be made by all friends of peace for the rejection of the Home Office Air Raid and Gas Defence Circular.

(13) Since Fascism is aiming at the unrestricted lowering of the workers' standard of living, the development of a co-ordinated movement for higher wages and shorter hours is a vital need of the anti-fascist movement.

(14) Now when we are facing a repetition of 1914 on a larger scale, the trade unions should take the lead in developing that united action of the working class, together with all friends of peace, which is the only way to save humanity. We, without reserve, repudiate the idea that there can be wars of defence between capitalist states and therefore urge that the workers' reply to capitalist war must be unqualified opposition.*

In furtherance of such united action we should work for :—

A SPECIAL T.U.C. to discuss Trade Union action to prepare and organise opposition to war.

Joint campaign of all working-class organisations to secure the *return of a Labour Government*, so as to achieve the demands of the workers.

Appeals to the General Council to move in the I.F.T.U. for *international trade union unity* with the Red International and unattached unions.

United campaign *against Fascism* for the dissolution of the Blackshirt organisation, for solidarity with the anti-fascist fight of the International Working Class.

YOUTH

(15) This Conference considers that the Trade Union Movement should give special attention to the organisation of the youth in view of the increased unemployment among young workers, their increased exploitation by the working of excessive hours at low rates of pay, and the attempts being made by fascism to recruit the youth.

This Conference welcomes the formation of the Junior Trades Councils in Bristol, Bradford and other places, and the formation of youth sections in various unions.

This Conference is of the opinion that a SPECIAL YOUTH CAMPAIGN be initiated by the Trades Union Congress, especially in the large manufacturing areas for :—

1. 100 per cent. Youth Trade Unionism.
2. Raising of the school-leaving age to 16, with adequate maintenance allowances.
3. Shorter hours of work than that of adult workers, with full opportunities of promotion, with corresponding wage increases.
4. More cultural and educational facilities, including the provision of sports grounds.

And that this campaign should be initiated in conjunction with the formation of :—

1. Youth sections of the respective unions, sports sections with full financial and moral support of Union Executives and District Committees,

and under the direction of local Trades Councils.

2. Junior Trades Councils, based upon youth delegates from Union branches,

as contained in the Memo. on Recruitment adopted at the National Conference of Trades Councils held at York.

EMERGENCY RESOLUTION ON ABYSSINIA

This Trade Union Conference declares its wholehearted support for the Abyssinian people in their resistance to the robber attack of Italian fascism.

We pledge ourselves to campaign for the active support of the working class to stop the war in Abyssinia by all possible means.

We demand that the British Government declare openly that peace is indivisible, and that it cease to use the League of Nations as a mere cloak for a policy of defending the interests of British Imperialism. We demand that

*It must be stated that the last sentence of this paragraph, which was added in Standing Orders and carried by Conference without discussion, does not accord with LABOUR MONTHLY policy. For the reasons for this readers are referred to several paragraphs in John A. Mahon's article (p. 625).

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the Government declare a real policy of defence of peace and demonstrate this policy by joining in the Franco-Soviet Peace Pact, and proposing in the League of Nations collective action to stop the fascist war.

We further declare our support for the anti-fascist fight of the Italian workers, whose enemies are not in Addis Ababa but in Rome. We call on the British T.U.C. to give immediate aid to the re-establishment of the Italian trade unions as a class force fighting for the downfall of Mussolini fascism.

Realising that the outbreak of the Italian attack would embroil the entire world in a frightful war, we welcome the decision of the Labour and Socialist International to establish contact with the Communist International in order to organise joint international action in defence of peace and against fascism. We are of the opinion that the joint meeting should take place immediately and decide to telegraph the Labour and Socialist International accordingly.

RECALL CONFERENCE RESOLUTIONS

Support for the Miners

This Conference declares its whole-hearted solidarity with the M.F.G.B. and the miners throughout the country in their struggle for the 2s. per shift wage increase.

We consider it necessary that all branches and union committees should take action to place the miners' case before the working class with a view to preparing support for any action the miners find necessary to undertake.

Trade Union Unity

This Conference welcomes the telegram of the Russian unions to the Margate T.U.C. and the reply sent by the Congress.

We declare our readiness to do everything possible to assist the rapid establishment of close relations between the Russian and British trade union movements in order to strengthen the fight against war and fascism.

We urge all District Committees to establish such relations with similar committees of the Russian unions.

Abyssinia

This Conference declares that the Fascist aggression upon Abyssinia calls for the following measures by the working class :—

1. United action for the stopping of all munitions and supplies to Mussolini.
2. Trade Union aid for rebuilding the Italian trade union movement and for the anti-fascist fight in Italy.
3. Mass pressure for use of all resources of the Covenant of the League of Nations, including all forms of sanctions together with the closing of the Suez Canal, to stop the Fascist war.
4. Aid for the Abyssinian people in defence of their national independence, and the immediate raising of the arms embargo which places Abyssinia at a grave disadvantage, compared with Fascist Italy ; opposition to all schemes of British and French imperialism, as well as Italian fascism, for the exploitation of Abyssinia.
5. Immediate activity of all working-class organisations to organise the defeat of the National Government at the coming election, and to return a Labour Government to secure the workers' demands.

A FEW COPIES ARE STILL AVAILABLE

I. *Information Material to the Bermondsey Trade Union Problems Conference on August 24 and 25.* They include facts on (i) Co-ordination, Membership of Unions affiliated to T.U.C. ; examples and results of wages movements, 1934-35 ; summary of unofficial strikes, Jan.-July, '35 ; examples of rationalisation in various industries ; strikes against rationalisation and speed-up. (2) The Black Circular ; resolutions in favour of the enlargement of Trade Union democracy for Margate T.U.C. (3) Wartime (1914-18) development of shop stewards' movement ; the aircraft shop committee movement ; other works' committees ; functions of shop stewards' movements ; examples of shop committee work. (4) Pre-war decisions of the International on war; decisions of Brighton T.U.C., '33, Weymouth '34 ; Fascism in Italy, Germany and Britain. (5) Brief history of movement for international trade union unity ; unity in various countries ; the membership of the two Internationals.

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BOOK REVIEW

THE VOLCANO OF THE BALKANS.

Terror in the Balkans. Albert Londres. (Constable.) pp. 244. 7s. 6d.

Heroes and Assassins. Stoyan Christowe. (Gollancz.) pp. 287. 12s. 6d.

THESE books purport to be an account of the influence and sinister workings of *Imro* (Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation—Komitadzis). They were intended to supply the demand for information on the subject aroused by the assassination of King Alexander and M. Barthou by a member of Imro last year in Marseilles. The first is the personal account of a French journalist in Bulgaria, who treats his subject in a sensational way, with a lengthy epilogue of nearly a 100 pages, written by a white Russian former secretary to the Russian Legation in Serbia, Leonide Zarine. The book is an excellent example of the usual attempt to conceal all major political problems vitally affecting the Balkan Peninsula ; while Londres treats his subject lightly and reduces it to the level of a thriller, the white Russian puts in the political touch : he glorifies the Jugoslav tyranny against the oppressed nationalities of Macedonia and Croatia. He extolls the " progress " made by Jugoslavia under the dictatorial régime of King Alexander.

The second, the work of a Macedonian emigrant to America, is wider in its scope and tries to present an historical account of Imro. The author, limited by his bourgeois outlook, fails to analyse and explain the process of Imro's development and disintegration. He gives a good account of the atrocities perpetrated by the Governments of Turkey, Greece and Jugoslavia (white-washing always Bulgaria) against the Macedonian masses, but falls entirely short, and even degenerates into a reactionary petty-bourgeois intellectual, when he tries to explain the developments within Imro itself in the post-war years, such as those which gave rise to the establishment of " *Imro United* " ; how this organisation at the head of the toiling Macedonian masses and along with the Communist Parties of Bulgaria, Jugoslavia and Greece is at present fighting against oppression in the Balkans, and for national liberation.

In this area the problem of oppressed nations and national minorities is a most burning question affecting 40 per cent. of the entire population. For over five centuries the Balkans have been the scene of bloody oppression and continual struggle for national liberation. The Serbs, the Greeks, the Bulgarians and the Macedonians have time and time again taken up arms against the Ottoman Empire for independence. In all these countries, terrorist organisations were the essence of the national liberatory movements, the advance guard of the fight against the oppressive tyranny of the Turks. In 1893 two Macedonian fighters, Damian Groueff and Pére Tocheff succeeded in welding together the different groups of Macedonian fighters and formed the Imro. The programme of the new organisation was the liberation of Macedonia from the Ottoman Empire. It was invested with a certain amount of religious fervour with rather an empty nationalist programme, utterly devoid of class struggle. The fact that no fight was waged by it against the greatest supporters of the Ottoman rule, the Macedonian landlords and rich Kulaks, who were acting as tax raisers for the Porte and played the part of Turkish gendarmerie, defeated its aims from the start.

The so-called " Peace Treaties " of Versailles, Trianon, Neuilly and St. Germain in 1919 fatally altered the political structure of the Balkans. Vengeance brought about a pitiful political butchery of the Peninsula. A number of nations who before had been independent or enjoyed certain national and cultural rights are now fully deprived of these liberties. There are National Minorities in every Balkan country. Greeks in Albania, Jugoslavia and Turkey ; Albanians in Jugoslavia and Greece ; Bulgarians in Greece

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and Jugoslavia, and oppressed nations, *e.g.*, Macedonia torn up into three parts and annexed to Jugoslavia, Greece and Bulgaria. Thrace, divided amongst Greece, Bulgaria and Turkey. Croatia, Montenegro, Cossovo, Slovenia, Dalmatia, all in Jugoslavia, while Transylvania, Bucovina, Dombrudja and Bessarabia were included in Rumania. In all these places a policy of systematic denationalisation is carried through, which does not shrink from any method of decimation, extermination and expulsion of the native populations (or as was decreed by the Treaty of Lausanne 1923, for the exchange of nationals between Greece and Turkey, and Bulgaria and Greece), forcible assimilation, forcible colonisation, for the adulteration of national entity and the reinforcement of the dominant national element.

All three states—Greece, Bulgaria and Jugoslavia—which dismembered Macedonia are carrying on a systematic policy of extinction of national culture. In the schools the teaching of the national language is forbidden. Murders of all fighters for freedom, mass arrests, tortures and mass massacres by means of "pacifying expeditions" to which thousands of advanced elements fall victims, are the order of the day. Post-war Imro organised under the patronage of the Bulgarian Government, by two Bulgarian officers of Macedonian extraction, Todoroff and Protogheroff, shirked the responsibility of taking up the struggle against this policy of national extinction. At the behest of its patron it organised masses of desperate expropriated peasants and declassed elements into terrorist bands for raids across the border into Jugoslavia and Greece, or for the "execution" of Jugoslav officials.

Imro failed to regain its pre-war influence. Its structure and leadership were unsuited to the maturing revolutionary crisis of the post-war years. While the majority of Imroites seeing through the manœuvre of the Bulgarian officers posing as National leaders, turned to the left and joined forces with the Communists, Imro was rapidly asserting itself as a Fascist body allied with the Bulgarian Fascist Government. The true class character of Imro was revealed thoroughly during the workers and peasants' revolution in 1923, when the Imro leaders assisted the Government of the butcher Tsankoff to drown the revolution in blood and have been responsible for the slaughter of 4,000 revolutionaries in Bulgarian Macedonia.

The "left wing" separated itself from Imro, accepted a revolutionary policy and started organising the Imro United. While Imro proper was sinking deeper and deeper into the fascist mire Imro United was rapidly rallying the Macedonian people round its revolutionary banner in a stubborn fight for liberation. And to-day, when the terrorist Mihailovist band has fallen into disfavour with the Sofia militarists and is disbanded, Imro United is there carrying on the struggle.

The leadership of Imro then entered the pay-roll of the Italian Government. The purpose was to bring about a rift between Bulgaria and Jugoslavia from which Italy, with her influence already firmly established in Albania, would benefit. The inquiries into the murder of King Alexander and M. Barthou in Marseilles revealed the complicity of Italian fascism as well as of the Hungarian Government and the Gestapo with the fascist-terrorist movements of the Imro and Ustachi (Croatia). The increasing alienation of Bulgaria from Italy, and its moving towards the Balkan Entente, made it necessary for the Government to dispense with the weapon of Imro which was the instrument for war-like tension between Jugoslavia and Bulgaria. The slaughterer of the Macedonian people, Ivan Mihailoff, found refuge in Turkey.

It is a fact that the Balkan peninsula is the focus of imperialist intrigues. The murder of King Alexander and the Greek rebellion proved that, but the Balkan question is a burning one affecting Europe and peace in Europe, and as such, it deserves a special study. It is a misfortune that no Marxist book on the Balkan question exists in the English language.

The two books under review leave untouched the essential facts, and the workers can derive no benefit from them.

DOROS ALASTOS.

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